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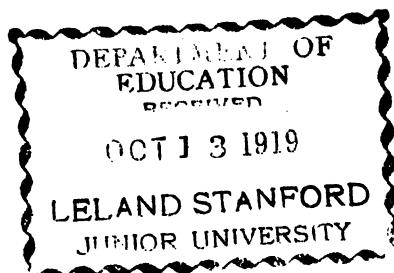
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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
LELAND STANFORD JR. UNIV.  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY



# PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION

BY

PERCY H. BOYNTON

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
AUTHOR OF "LONDON IN ENGLISH LITERATURE"

GINN AND COMPANY

BOSTON • NEW YORK • CHICAGO • LONDON  
ATLANTA • DALLAS • COLUMBUS • SAN FRANCISCO

## PREFACE

This is the only portion of the present volume which is addressed to teachers, for the aim has been consciously pursued in every other part of the book to write it for the student and to adjust it to his grade and temper of mind. As the general chapter headings indicate, it has seemed wisest to cling to the old classification of material presented in scores of effective books already in print. At the same time the attempt has been made to keep in mind two matters of importance which have not always been recognized in the past.

The first of these is the recognition of the vital difference between reproductive statement of fact and interpretative writing. The tendency in many classrooms during the last decade has been to emphasize the claims of definite, concrete, homely material, and to disparage any attempts at writing on subject matter of an abstract type. There seems to be little question that the simple and concrete should be dealt with by the elementary student; but the conviction has been growing in many quarters, and some of these far disconnected, that the inclination of the high school and undergraduate mind to consider fundamentals should be turned to account, and that interpretative writing with reference to the larger concepts of life should be encouraged in rational form under guidance. This can be done only when a progressive scheme of subject matter is arranged, and work is provided in connection with subjects of increasing difficulty. The student who is eligible for courses in ethics, æsthetics, history, political economy, sociology, and literature is ill provided for if he is not helped to express himself about these matters.

to a place in the college curriculum is either as a part of a course in logic or as a separate course by itself.

Instructors who dissent from this view may base work on Mr. Moulton's excellent presentation; those who feel that a less rigid and imposing task should properly be coördinated with work in exposition, description, and narration should direct their classes to study the principles in the first part of Chapter VIII and practice them according to the application in the latter half of the chapter.

The volume was sketched out entirely without reference to any text. In the various revisions reference has been made to every text available. Yet in the main it is pleasant to recall that the debt of the author is most specific to the teaching and published works of two men whom he faced as a college student, Professor John F. Genung and Professor Barrett Wendell, and to the many classes of tolerant students with whom he has wrought in The University of Chicago. To these in particular are owed the numerous illustrations entitled "student themes." Ready criticism and suggestion has been given by every member of my own department who has been consulted, and from other departments the subjects with readings in Chapter I were generously supplied by Messrs. Joseph W. Hayes, Arthur P. Scott, James H. Tufts, Curtis Walker, and Chester D. Wright. Mrs. Katherine Graham contributed material to the exercises in Chapters IV and V. My greatest debt, however, is to Mr. James N. Nelson, without whose untiring coöperation the book could hardly have been written. The privilege of quoting copyrighted material has been granted by various publishers as follows: D. Appleton and Company: Charles W. Eliot's "Present College Questions"; Doubleday, Page & Company: Joseph Conrad's "Youth," Woodrow Wilson's "The New Freedom"; Duffield & Company: H. G. Wells's "Marriage" and "The New Machiavelli"; Harper & Brothers: George W. Curtis's "Orations and Addresses"; Henry Holt and Company: William De Morgan's

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## THE FORM OF MANUSCRIPTS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CORRECTING THEM

A manuscript should be written legibly in dark ink upon ruled paper with a margin line, and this margin should be left vacant as a space for corrections. Manuscripts should be written on one side of the paper only, pages should be numbered, and the whole theme folded vertically. On the outside, as on the front cover of a book, should be full data concerning the course, the division, the writer, the nature of the work, and the date ; as, for example,

English 1c  
John Smith  
Theme 3  
October 18, 1914

In order to save a great many unnecessary longhand corrections, the following abbreviations to be placed in the margin are very generally used. In addition to these, if the passage commented on is a brief one, it is usually underlined ; if more than a few words in length, a vertical line indicating its extent is usually placed at the right edge of the margin.

A.	Ambiguous
Bar.	Barbarism
cap.	Capital letter needed
Co.	Sentence lacks coherence
¶ Co.	Paragraph lacks coherence
E.	Sentence lacks emphasis
¶ E.	Paragraph lacks emphasis
Fig.	Unskillful use of figurative language
G.	Fault in grammar

## BOOKS OF INTEREST ON SPECIAL CHAPTERS

### *Chapters I and II*

GENUNG, J. F., *Working Principles of Rhetoric*  
WENDELL, BARRETT, *English Composition*

### *Chapter III*

LEWIS, E. H., *The History of the English Paragraph*

### *Chapters IV and V*

KIMBALL, L. G., *Structure of the English Sentence*

### *Chapter VI*

GREENOUGH, J. B., and KITTREDGE, G. L., *Words and their Ways in English Speech*  
LOUNSBURY, T. R., *The Standard of Usage in English Speech*

### *Chapter VIII*

FULTON, M. G., *Expository Writing*

### *Chapter IX*

FOSTER, WM. T., *Argumentation and Debating*

### *Chapter X*

ALBRIGHT, E. M., *Descriptive Writing*

### *Chapter XI*

GRABO, C. H., *The Art of the Short Story*

### *Chapter XII*

WINCHESTER, C. T., *Principles of Literary Criticism*

# PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION

## PART I. THE ELEMENTS

### CHAPTER I

#### WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

*The reason for teaching composition in college.* Relation of writing to speech. Characteristics of oral discourse. Legitimate aim for composition study.

*Writing what one knows — Presentation of fact.* Subjects from first-hand experience. Subjects from experience and study. Subjects drawn from books alone. Limitation of subjects.

*Writing what one thinks — Interpretation of fact.* Dangers of the abstract subject. Thinking based on observation. Thinking based on study.

*How to use books as sources of information.* Using more than one authority. Developing the habit of taking notes. Speed in reading for data. Proper use of quoted material.

#### THE REASON FOR TEACHING COMPOSITION IN COLLEGE

A student of college age, who confronts a course in freshman English in spite of the fact that he has been taking courses in English in one form or another from the very beginning of his school career, may well question why the experience is prolonged even beyond school days. It is only within the last generation that courses in English composition have been required in college. Since 1890 or thereabouts, more and more emphasis has been laid upon them. Already

written examinations, he will get little credit for the information he possesses. As the fashion has finally evolved itself, the best written discourse of the twentieth century has come to resemble in all essentials the best spoken discourse, so that drill in English composition is therefore simply for the purpose of bringing students to the point of writing as simply and effectively as they should be able to talk.

**Characteristics of oral discourse.** Most students — most people, in fact, who are not professionally engaged in journalism or literature — talk rather better than they write. Unembarrassed by the thought of how they are doing it, they compose fluent and simply formed sentences and cast these sentences into groups which, if written out, might roughly be described as paragraphs. Moreover, however defective their talk may be in point of clearness, they do what they can to make it interesting, and they are apt to succeed moderately well. The feature of good written discourse which is most likely to be lacking in casual talk is solid structure. Dialogue or conversation is by its very nature interrupted and broken. A perfectly constructed succession of comments and replies would be perfectly uns spontaneous and unlifelike. Ordinary talk is connected but rambling, guided in its course by all sorts of happy and unhappy accidents, begun on chance, and ended by a parting of the ways or the arrival of a third person. A further defect of oral composition is that most people have far too small a stock of words from which they can draw at will.

**Legitimate aim for composition study.** A legitimate aim for composition study in college is, then, to train the student to write sentences and paragraphs at least as effective as those which he habitually uses ; to accustom him to construct

- Main Street in —
- Up on the Hill and Down by the Factories
- as a Railroad Center
- Village Games in —
- The Woman's Aid Society in —
- Church Sociables in —
- How I came to be a Sprinter (Pole Vaulter, Ball Player, etc.)
- Being a "Bell-hop" in a Summer Hotel
- Selling Goods in a Department Store
- Contrasts between School and College
- Conducting a School Paper
- How not to prepare for Amateur Theatricals
- Class Rivalry at College

This is the kind of material which is naturally interesting to him, and on which he chooses to put his mind because he likes it. He is accustomed to thinking about it, and he needs only to arrange the material, which is almost as much a part of himself as his prejudices or his clothes.

At the outset student themes should give information, not only because practice in work of this sort is a needed preliminary to later student work but because such themes can most easily justify themselves. Compositions whose primary purpose is to give pleasure through appeal to the imagination are fruitless if ill done and very hard to do well. There is plenty of room for drill work in describing things or in telling about events not familiar to the average reader. Such accounts may employ narrative or descriptive processes in order to present facts, without attempting ambitious narration or description as literary forms of discourse. If the student in his early efforts will confine himself to making clear what he knows to somebody who does not know, he will in effect be writing exposition no matter how he does it. But for the moment he need not think about the forms of

in order to get good examples. Similarly, the history of his town, the study of the growing needs of his region, an inquiry into some industries which are near at hand but have never caught his attention — these are all a second kind of subject matter on which he can be sure of having some definite knowledge when he writes. For example :

The Foreign Population in ——

First Years of the Commission Form of Government in ——

Pioneer Days in ——

How the Location of —— controlled its Development

What a Deep Waterway would accomplish for ——

Geological Characteristics of —— County

**Subjects drawn from books alone.** In adopting for composition subjects for which information is mainly drawn from reading, the most important features should be two. The subject ought not only to be such that there is a fair chance of the student's being really intelligent about it but it ought to be restricted so narrowly that there is a fair chance of his writing something definite within the limits of a theme. These points ought to be remembered in connection with composition upon book material even more clearly than in discussions of subjects drawn from first-hand experience. The average student, when directed to write on material drawn from libraries, is apt in his first efforts to turn toward certain hackneyed subjects, not because he cares about them, but simply because he has heard of them so often that they most naturally come to his mind. Woman Suffrage, Immigration, the Tariff, the Liquor Traffic — these always come home to the instructor when first he issues a call for discussions of other than personal subjects. In a way these are available, but only in case all other inspirations fail.

grasp on some of these perplexed subjects than by writing upon them, for the facts will have to be mastered before they are put into themes or compositions. Again, wherever the facts can be ascertained, there is the best of reasons for writing on the actual conflict — on definite individuals, episodes, battles, and campaigns. The interpretation of these facts and the discussion of debatable points may well be left to the historians ; for the present, the gaining of information is quite enough of a task for the school and college student. For the student of easy-going intellectual habits, for whom neither his own desires nor the other courses can supply material, the tariff, woman suffrage, or immigration will always serve as the last resource — the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. (See topics with book references, pp. 17-21.)

**Limitation of subjects.** Few ideas seem harder to transmit than the need of so limiting a subject that it is capable of being dealt with inside the narrow confines of a student's theme. The avoidance of vague abstractions is to be commended, but other subjects are not all equally available. To attempt a big subject in a theme is like trying to pick up a hillside ; it cannot be grasped, it can only be pawed. The student should emulate David's wisdom in selecting five smooth stones. If David had gone after boulders, Goliath might have outlived Methuselah. Two simple statements are worth keeping in mind : (1) the bigger the *subject* the less can be done with it in a few hundred words ; (2) the briefer the *title* the more ground is it likely to cover. Thus, "Conservation" is briefly impossible ; "Conservation of Natural Resources" is less hopeless, though incapable of real treatment in less than a volume ; "Conservation of Mineral Resources" is a further step in the right direction ; "Recent

**The dangers of the abstract subject.** Unfortunately the bungling platitudes of the conventional graduation speech have made this sort of subject matter a standing joke at the expense of the schoolmaster and his pupils. For generations schoolboys and schoolgirls, without any training as to the use of facts, have been allowed and even encouraged to write vaguely on difficult subjects. Mark Twain plays with the idea pleasantly in the description of a school commencement in "Tom Sawyer." What Tom's friends fumbled with on that historic occasion is the kind of subject that will always be attempted as long as youthful students consult nothing but their own inexperience. As I write, a set of manuscripts for a prize oratorical contest is laid on my desk. The subjects are all too big, so much so that it is quite impossible for students of high-school age to have done any profitable thinking on them. The most nearly possible is on "Intensive Farming." Further limited, something definite might be done with that. The next is entitled "Child Labor," but turns out to be on the rapacity of capital. Either of them is broad enough for a whole volume, but the remaining ones are still more elusive; "Universal Peace," "The Progress of Human Thought," "The Three Duties of Man," and "The Greatness of America." What shall we say to these? Simply that in wide-awake, maturing students the desire to treat such themes is always present and that it ought to be gratified *if the written product is based on definite reading and is definitely limited in scope.* It is right that the student who deserves the name should want to puzzle out on paper his relation to himself, to the culture for which he has come to college, to society of which he is a member, and "to all that has been and is defined in the name of God."

**Thinking based on study.** Material based on a combination of personal experience and study or upon study and meditation may in similar fashion lend itself to this larger treatment. The study of sociology, economics, history, and political science lends a new significance to one's own town or city by revealing how general principles are active in the affairs of common life. Observation reënforced by study justifies the treatment of such subjects as these :

- The Effect of the Tariff on my Father's Business
- The Industrial Transformation of my Home City
- The Rise and Decline of — Street
- The Lack of Down-town Churches in —
- Puritan Survivals in the Vermont Hills (or elsewhere)
- The Part of — in the Civil War
- The Cost of the European War to the United States

Finally, and after due practice in these less confusing subjects, it is not only permissible but much to be desired for the thinking student to attempt the broader subjects based almost entirely upon reading and study. With such subjects he may still succeed if he remembers not to attempt boiling down all human knowledge into a teacup. For a short theme, definitions of some abstract ideas are often enough ; or rival theories on a definite point, definitely illustrated ; or applications of a basic principle to some simple, homespun situation. (See topics with book references, pp. 17-21.)

#### HOW TO USE BOOKS AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**Using more than one authority.** For one who has never attempted to use authorities, the question of how to gather material from them is always a perplexing one. The theme writer's feeling is that if somebody else has written on a

but the latter demands an aggressive wakefulness that most of us dislike to spur ourselves to. We prefer the comfortable ease of a morris chair to an erect position at the desk.

The difficulty really begins, as a rule, in the process of reading. We start to relax as we start to read. The labor of getting out a pencil or sitting up to write is offensive. We think we can remember the passage we want, and then when we really need it we first waste time in hunting it out again and then are lured into transcribing it by the coincidence of having the statement before us and a fair sheet of paper waiting for the written word. As we copy, our sources of original expression dry up and we are easier victims for the next temptation of the same sort. A good rule, then, is when studying always to read with pencil in hand and when taking notes always (except in matters of statistics or technical formulæ) to recast the original passage into new phrasing. As far as other passages go, it is safe in general not to quote any that do not stay in the memory without the aid of any written reminder. Of course there are exceptions to such precepts as these—literature is full of them; but this advice is given not to writers of literature but to college students who need to practice original writing for a season and who will have plenty of time to quote later.

**Speed in reading for data.** On the method of reading when collecting material for any written report, many students are more or less at sea. There is no one recipe, nor any one speed or attitude of mind. As with most of the problems connected with composition, the only general statement to be made which will cover all cases is that "It depends." How one shall read depends on the subject matter, on the kind of data sought for, and on the previous knowledge of the

The following specimen subjects based on reading are the sort assigned for work in other departments which furnish admirable material for English composition :

#### REPRESENTATION OF FACT

1. *An Outline History of Immigration into the United States since 1820*.<sup>1</sup> COMMONS, J. R., *Races and Immigrants*, chap. iv; FAIRCHILD, H. P., *Immigration*, chaps. ii-vi; HALL, P. F., *Immigration*, chap. i; HOURWICH, I. A., *Immigration and Labor*, chap. iii; Reports of the Immigration Commission, Vol. I, pp. 51-118.

2. *Vauxhall Gardens as seen in English fiction* : BESANT, *No Other Way*, chap. ix; *St. Katherine's by the Tower*, Part II, chap. xxvii; BURNEY, *Cecilia*, chap. vi; *Evelina*, Letter XLVI; CHURCHILL, *Richard Carvel*, chap. xl; FIELDING, *Amelia*, Vol. II, Book IX, chap. ix; GOLDSMITH, *Citizen of the World*, Letter LXXI; SMOLLETT, *Humphrey Clinker*, Letters of May 22 and 31; THACKERAY, *Pendennis*, chap. xlvi; *Virginians*, Vol. I, chap. xl.

3. *Newgate Prison as seen in English Fiction* : AINSWORTH, *Jack Sheppard*, Ep. III, chap. ix; BESANT and RICE, *Chaplain of the Fleet*, Part I, chap. viii; BESANT, *Dorothy Forster*, chaps. xii, xvi, xxi, xxii; *No Other Way*, chap. iii; *Orange Girl*, Book II, chap. ix; *St. Katherine's by the Tower*, Part II, chaps. xiii, xiv, xv, xviii, xix, xxiii, xxx; BROOKE, *Fool of Quality*, chap. vii; DICKENS, *Great Expectations*, chaps. xx, xxxii; FIELDING, *Amelia*, Vol. II, Book XII, chap. v; *Jonathan Wild*, Book III, chap. iv; Book IV, chaps. ii, iii; SCOTT, *Peveril of the Peak*, Book II, chaps. xvi-xviii; THACKERAY, *Henry Esmond*, Book II, chaps. i, ii.

Themes can be based upon the subtopics suggested in the parentheses after each of the four following subjects :

4. *Habit (Relation of Consciousness and Behavior, etc.)* : ANGELL, J. R., *Psychology*, chap. iii; JAMES, WILLIAM, *Psychology*

<sup>1</sup> This might be subdivided into periods, each being material for one theme; for example, from 1820 to 1848; from 1848 to 1865; from 1865 to 1890; from 1890 to 1910.

KENNEDY, J. M., *How the War Began*; *Why We are at War*; *Diplomatic Correspondence*, in the *New York Times*; *The New York Times Current History of the European War*; BALDWIN, E. F., *The World War*; Germanistic Society of Chicago, Pamphlets; the *Fatherland*, pro-German weekly, also publishes pamphlets—"The Truth About Germany," "Austria-Hungary and the War," etc.; *The World's Work* War Manuals; Oxford University Pamphlets.

#### INTERPRETATION OF FACT

11. *Teuton vs. Slav*: VON MACH, E., *What Germany Wants*, chaps. vi, vii; BOAS, F., "The Race-War Myth," in *Everybody's Magazine*, November, 1914; *The Pan-German Doctrine* (Anon.), pp. 1-61; FROBENIUS, H., *The German Empire's Hour of Destiny*, chap. ii; CHIROL, *Germany and the Fear of Russia* (Oxford Pamphlet); *The New York Times Current History of the European War*, pp. 42-43, 111-114, 119-122, 209-210, 358-365, 433; HAZEN, C. D., *Europe since 1815*, chap. xxix; SLOANE, W. U., "Teuton against Slav," in the *Independent*, August 10, 1914.

12. *The Austro-Servian Quarrel*: Serbia and the Serbs (Oxford Pamphlet); STEED, *Hapsburg Monarchy*, pp. 100-105, 224-261; "Austria-Hungary and the War," in the *Fatherland* (pro-German weekly, New York).

13. *Belgian Neutrality*: *The Case of Belgium*, pp. 3-11; "The Case of Belgium in the Light of Official Reports," in *The Fatherland*; *The New York Times Current History of the European War*, pp. 30, 185, 370-374, 444-450, 507-514, 545-548; *Diplomatic Correspondence*, in the *New York Times*.

14. *Should America Arm?* HART, A. B., *The War in Europe*, chap. xi; *World's Work*, Fourth Manual; ROOSEVELT, T., *America and the World War*; STOCKTON, R., *Peace Insurance*; ANGELL, N., *The Great Illusion*.

15. *Nationalistic Aspirations*: (1) *In the Balkans*, SCHURMAN, J. G., *The Balkan Wars*, pp. 1-34, 126-131; GIBBONS, H. A., *The New Map of Europe*, chap. xii; HART, A. B., *The War in Europe*, pp. 99-120; "Servia Irredenta," in the *Edinburgh Review*, August, 1914. (2) *In Austria-Hungary*, GIBBONS, H. A., *The New Map of Europe*, chap. ix; STEED, *Hapsburg Monarchy*,

accounts translated into English; EMERTON, EPHRAIM, *Introduction to the Middle Ages*, pp. 214-218—a simple, clear statement of the subject; HODGKIN, THOMAS, *Life of Charlemagne*, pp. 182-207—emphatic and one-sided.

22. *Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV; which got the better of the Contest?* ADAMS, G. B., *Civilization during the Middle Ages* (1905), pp. 227-247—on the papal side; BRYCE, JAMES, *Holy Roman Empire* (1904), pp. 153-166—definitely on the papal side; TOUT, T. F., *Empire and Papacy* (1903), pp. 120-150—succinct statement of fact; VINCENT, M. R., *Age of Hildebrand* (1896), pp. 52-118, portions—somewhat more extended and more colored.

23. *Does Peter the Hermit deserve the Credit for starting the First Crusade?* MICHAUD, J. F., *The Crusades* (1853), Vol. I, *The First Crusade*—gives credit to Peter; COX, G. W., *The Crusades* (1898), pp. 19-39—much the same, a little modified; LUDLOW, J. M., *Age of the Crusades* (1896), pp. 70-77—denies any credit to Peter; ARCHER, T. A., and KINGSFORD, C. L., *The Crusades* (1902), pp. 26-40—allows Peter a certain amount of credit; BAKER, ERNEST, article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., half a page—summarizes evidence against truth of legend about Peter.

24. *Is Pleasure the Good? the Greek Views:* ARISTOTLE, *Ethics*, Book X, chaps. i-v; PLATO, *Protogoras* (tr. by B. JOWETT, ed. 1907, Charles Scribner's Sons), Vol. I of Works, pp. 151-157.

25. *Is Pleasure the Good? the Utilitarian Theory:* BENTHAM, JEREMY, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, chaps. i, iv (reprinted in SELBY BIGGE, *British Moralists*, Vol. I, pp. 339-345, 356-359); MILL, JOHN STUART, *Utilitarianism*, chaps. ii, iv.

26. *Is Pleasure the Good? Criticisms of Utilitarianism:* CARLYLE, THOMAS, *Past and Present*, Book III, chap. iv; DEWEY, JOHN and TUFTS, J. H., *Ethics*, chap. xiv; MACKENZIE, J. S., *Manual of Ethics*, Book II, chap. iv.

**Proper use of quoted material.** There is another point to be made in connection with the question of using quotations. Why they should be resorted to seldom if ever has

been discussed sufficiently. When they actually are used, they should be set off by quotation marks. To quote without punctuating the borrowed passage is to be guilty of the ug offense of plagiarism. The general principle is the very cle one that what an author has written is as definitely his own work as what a man has painted or carved ; yet with this difference, that, as unacknowledged quotation does not actual deprive the original owner of his work, the actual harm in case of this sort is done to the man who steals and not to him who is stolen from.

To a student who really wants to be honest, there are, however, certain grounds for honest doubt in the application of the principle. If all expressions which have been used before should be set in quotation marks, why not put them about every composition and be done with it ? In a preceding paragraph " what a man has painted " is not a new clause, nor are " unacknowledged quotation " and " the original owner " new and unique phrases. To the student who cannot make up his mind or is inclined to quibble for the sake of argument, we can explain that there is no moral transgression in employing certain set phrases — such as " the power of the press," " innocent bystander," " the almighty dollar " — which we are conscious of as a sort of special compound words ; or even a few universally familiar expressions which we know and everyone else recognizes as quotations, such as the Biblical " wages of sin," or Shakespeare's " There shall be no more cakes and ale," or Pope's " T is folly to be wise," or Sterne's " temper the wind to the shorn lamb." The quotation which should be labeled by the use of the proper marks is the expression or passage, long or short, which could conceivably be mistaken as the work of the quoter instead of the work of the original author.

*Could* be mistaken, because, by any intelligent reader, unacknowledged quotation is usually detected ; for the fact is that the honest writer will never stumble into using more than a phrase, and the dishonest one, quoting to atone for his own sluggishness or awkwardness, invariably selects passages which stand out in glittering contrast to his own style. The consequence is that these borrowed sentences are as streaks of scarlet against backgrounds of dusty brown. They burst out of their context like new wine out of old bottles.

#### SUMMARY

The foregoing comment on a sordid and unsavory subject, needed as a mere matter of information by many elementary students, is in another way no more than a confirmation of the basic principle in governing the choice of a subject ; that a writer should treat only of material with which he is familiar. To summarize, this material may be familiar to him because it has been drawn from his personal, intimate, everyday experience. It may be familiar because he has gone a little out of his way by seeing it and studying it at first hand ; or it may be familiar because — though it is drawn from remote places, or past history, or technical and nonpopular sources near at hand — he has resorted to books with such methodical care that he really knows what he is talking about. Finally, in all these cases, the subject should be so restricted that something definite and pointed can be stated about it within the limits set for the task in hand.

## CHAPTER II

### THE WHOLE COMPOSITION

*Interest a property of the whole composition.* The value of expert special knowledge. The need of a specific point for the composition.

*Interest and Clearness secured by the introduction.* Deciding on scal point of view, tone, and so on. Beginning clearly but informally.

*Clearness secured by the whole plan.* Organizing thought an artific process. The use of casual jottings. Rearrangement and eliminatio Brevity in an advance plan. Definiteness in an advance plan.

*Interest resident in detail subject matter.* Avoidance of vague generalization. Avoidance of vague "literary" phrasing. Avoidance of rash superl tives. The selection of vivid detail. (For Interest secured by elaboratio of detail, see Chapters III and VIII, pp. 57-68 and 227-240.)

*Clearness assured by the conclusion.* The need of coming to a deliberat ending. The danger of too elaborate an ending. The omission of an e plicit conclusion. The informal recapitulation. The formal summary.

### INTEREST A PROPERTY OF THE WHOLE COMPOSITION

**The value of expert knowledge.** Granting that the author whether he be a man of letters or a student in a required composition course, should have in hand limited subject matter of definite interest to himself, his salvation still hangs or whether he has anything to say. He is apt to feel, at first that even though he does know more or less about "Zinc Mining in Southern Wisconsin," for example, there is no particular reason why he should pour himself out on paper about it. Perhaps in general there is not. And yet, if he makes a virtue of necessity, he may be reassured by the thought that on this particular subject he is the best-informed

man in his class. Because what he knows has been familiar to him for years, he should not be misled into assuming that it may not be vastly interesting to people who have never known anything about it. This advantage of special knowledge is what gives rise to all the special articles in the monthly magazines. A man goes from college into the Illinois coal mines and finds the whole experience tremendously vivid. It is no more so than it has always been, but he is able to tell about it on paper and the reading public respond with keen attention.<sup>1</sup>

**The need of a specific point.** This particular author has very unusual material and an unusual ability to present it; but, vivid as it is, he would not have made much of it if he had not concentrated all the interest in a succession of articles on one special point — the element of risk in mining, to the miner, to the investor, and to the mine itself. Without such concentration of interest, the most promising subject imaginable could result in a hazy, aimless piece of written work; but with some definite point in mind, common material can be made to seem anything but commonplace. An article appeared in one of the magazines some years ago on one of the great gunpowder mills of the country. It was written for the general reading public, people who would not bring any great enthusiasm to the perusal of such an article, but who were quite willing to become interested if the writer could make them so. This writer could. From out of the variety of points which were open to treatment (the complexity of the process, the efficiency of management, the great scale of the operations, and so on) he chose one for chief emphasis — the extraordinary precautions against accident. Some of these were

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Husband, "Fire in the Mine," in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

picturesque, some ingenious, some amusing, and all of the sensible ; and he made his point so clear that at least one his readers — though he cannot recall the company or t location of the works or even the name of the author, the aicle, or the magazine — still recalls vividly the central kerr of interest in this essay and even many of the details us to make it clear.

There is a similar chance for the student with his "Zi Mining in Southern Wisconsin." Cornered with the necessity of meeting an assignment, he selects this as the obvio subject on which, in comparison to his classmates, he h expert information. Informed that his first step should be decide on the special point of his composition, his reactio unless he is the exceptional student, is to write at the he of a clean page, "My first point is to show the general — Here it is time to stop and begin again, for in the case any but mature writers, the " point," if there be one, is bound to be sheathed not in *general* but in some *particular* matte We could follow his mental processes at unprofitable lengt The conclusion of the matter is, however, that after recon sideration and, very likely, advice, he decides that the " poi is to show how, even though this field has been worked b a few years, the industry is already declining."

This is so definite that the composition will mean something to the reader, for the whole piece of work will follow along a path which will fetch up at this destination. Th conclusion does not amount to much in itself ; it is the dec sion to arrive at such a conclusion that counts. Now, if th theme writer cares to deal with the discovery and opening u of the district, the mining methods employed, the degree o economy or waste which has characterized them, the exten

of the zinc resources, and the scale of operations, the treatment of any or all of these topics will show how it is that in the course of one short decade this business has risen, developed, and begun to decline.

#### INTEREST AND CLEARNESS SECURED BY THE INTRODUCTION

**Deciding on scale, point of view, tone, and so on.** With the point in mind, but before the actual writing or even the complete planning of the theme is undertaken, there are a few basic matters to be decided. How long is the completed product to be? Is the subject to be treated with scientific thoroughness, or briefly and in a measure casually? On account of the kind of subject adopted, is it to be presented in a soberly matter-of-fact mood, in a tone of indignant protest, or with a note of humor? Is there anything in the title or in the raw material which demands a preliminary word of explanation before the plunge into the real question? What is the reason for writing on this matter at this time? These queries need not always be deliberately thought out by the experienced writer, but he ought to be able to answer them at a moment's notice. If he cannot, he is almost as certain to flounder and fall as he would be if he started to strike out across the ice without first being sure that his skates were securely on.

**Beginning clearly but informally.** Whether the answers to these queries are reached after careful consideration or with no conscious exertion, once decided upon, they determine not only the whole scale and treatment of the subject in the body of the theme but also the nature of the opening

passage. Formal introductions, like many other matters of style, may be said to have gone out. As a rule, the present generation does not care to preface a conversation with a fanfare of trumpets and an elaborate processional entrance of the speakers. People meet each other simply and begin at once. So compositions begin; but the opening paragraphs nevertheless hold out certain pledges to the reader which he expects the rest to fulfill. He expects a certain scale to be adopted, a certain point of view to be maintained, a certain mood to prevail, and if his expectation is not satisfied, he has just cause for grievance against the author. Moreover, if any definite preliminary explanation is needed and omitted, he is quite justified, after a page or two, in laying down the article unreadable.

Since the twentieth-century reader distrusts the writer who begins with a formal rhetorical salute, the task is the more difficult really to do a formal service without seeming to. The writer is likely to lose his public if he begins with, "By 'Southern Wisconsin' I intend in the following brief account to limit myself to that region which lies," etc. But if he says, "For the last ten years the general neighborhood of [certain specified towns and cities] has been the center of," etc., he has produced his information without doing it laboriously or pedantically.

In general, there are two main matters to remember in connection with introductions: the opening portion of a composition puts the writer under certain obligations to his reader and these have been already mentioned; again, the less formality about introductions, and about conclusions as well, the better for all concerned. But it is one matter to decide that a given composition does not require any set scheme for beginning or ending and quite another matter to neglect these

important parts of a theme. The decision to do without them may be justified by the nature of the subject and the effectiveness of the treatment, but if the lack of them is simply due to forgetfulness, the theme is more likely than not to begin in confusion and to end in chaos.

#### **EXERCISE**

Read carefully the following introductions to short essays or chapters. What are you led to expect as to scale, point of view, and general seriousness or lightness of tone? Which is introduced by reference to a parallel case? Which by an anecdote? Which by a general statement of the point? Which by reference to a pertinent occasion?

#### **THE FEMINIZING OF CULTURE**

With the weakening of sex prejudices and the removal of legal restrictions on women's freedom it was inevitable that they should invade fields of activity where formerly only men were found. Since women must eat every one knew that they must work, and the sight of a woman at work was no new experience. Even in the days when they were most secluded and protected, the number kept in ease was always very small compared with the women slaves and servants who spun, cooked and served. Hence men were used to seeing women at work; and while industrial adjustments have not been easily made, they have still been accepted as a matter of course. But who, fifty years ago, could have imagined that to-day women would be steadily monopolizing learning, teaching, literature, the fine arts, music, the church and the theater? And yet that is the condition at which we have arrived. We may scoff at the way women are doing the work, and reject the product, but that does not alter the fact that step by step women are taking over the field of liberal culture as opposed to the field of immediately productive work. — EARL BARNES, "Woman in Modern Society," (B. W. Huebsch)

## THE TARIFF—"PROTECTION," OR PRIVILEGE?

Every business question, in this country, comes back, sooner or later, to the question of the tariff. You cannot escape from it, no matter in what direction you go. The tariff is situated in relation to other questions like Boston Common in the old arrangement of that interesting city. I remember seeing once, in *Life*, a picture of a man standing at the door of one of the railway stations in Boston and inquiring of a Bostonian the way to the Common. "Take any of these streets," was the reply, "in either direction." Now, as the Common was related to the winding streets of Boston, so the tariff question is related to the economic questions of our day. Take any direction and you will sooner or later get to the Common. And, in discussing the tariff, you may start at the centre and go in either direction you please.—WOODROW WILSON, "The New Freedom"

## ON SOME MENTAL EFFECTS OF THE EARTHQUAKE

When I departed from Harvard for Stanford University last December, almost the last good-by I got was that of my old Californian friend B: "I hope they'll give you a touch of earthquake while you're there, so that you may also become acquainted with *that* Californian institution."

Accordingly, when, lying awake at about half past five on the morning of April 18 in my little "flat" on the campus of Stanford, I felt the bed begin to waggle, my first consciousness was one of gleeful recognition of the nature of the movement. "By Jove," I said to myself, "here's B's old earthquake, after all!" And then, as it went *crescendo*, "And a jolly good one it is, too!" I said.

Sitting up involuntarily, and taking a kneeling position, I was thrown down on my face as it went *fortior* shaking the room exactly as a terrier shakes a rat. Then everything that was on anything slid off to the floor, over went bureau and chiffonier with a crash, as the *fortissimo* was reached; plaster cracked, an awful roaring noise seemed to fill the outer air, and in an instant all was still again, save the soft babble of human voices from far and near that soon began to make itself heard, as the inhabitants in costumes

*négligés* in various degrees sought the greater safety of the street and yielded to the passionate desire for sympathetic communication.

The thing was over, as I understand the Lick Observatory to have declared, in forty-eight seconds. . . . — WILLIAM JAMES, "Memories and Studies"

#### WHY GREAT MEN ARE NOT ELECTED PRESIDENT

Europeans often ask, and Americans do not always explain, how it happens that this great office, the greatest in the world, unless we except the Papacy, to which any one can rise by his own merits, is not more frequently filled by great and striking men. In America, which is beyond all other countries the country of a "career open to talents," a country, moreover, in which political life is unusually keen and political ambition widely diffused, it might be expected that the highest place would always be won by a man of brilliant gifts. But since the heroes of the Revolution died out with Jefferson and Adams and Madison, no person except General Grant has reached the chair whose name would have been remembered had he not been President, and no President except Abraham Lincoln has displayed rare or striking qualities in the chair. — JAMES BRYCE, "The American Commonwealth"

#### CLEARNESS SECURED BY THE WHOLE PLAN

**Organizing thought an artificial process.** The determination on the point, or conclusion, and the decision as to a proper introduction promise well for the success of the completed theme; but they by no means guarantee it. It is much simpler to feel a keen interest in some topic, to gain some knowledge of it, and to foresee the general line of approach than to formulate the product of such interest and knowledge into an orderly statement. To draw casually on this kind of intellectual assets in conversation is as much as the average man is called on to do, and that is the reason why the average man is so much more effective at informal talk than at

speech making. Yet a speech, which is one form of composition, is simply formulated talk, no more coherent than many a passing exchange of opinion with one's neighbor, but a gainer in unity and emphasis; no richer in Interest, but superior in Clearness.

To get one's ideas into shape is a wholly artificial process. In order to do it with any success, the student must have his material before him, at least in the rough. If he is a prodigy, he can perhaps get it in his mind's eye and dispense with pen and paper; but the normal student will better have some jottings in black and white. To try to write out a part before he has some design for the whole will surely result in an avoidable waste of energy. Even in the simplest statements of fact which follow the order of time, writing out the main points is a step making for unity and emphasis in the theme. So in the account of the mountain climb which follows, the listing of the various hardships with the conclusion ahead will lead toward their being so treated as to make the last paragraph natural and believable. And so too in the military-school experience, the listing of the topics will lead from the less to the greater evils, as well as from the earlier to the later, and somehow prepare for the "surprising change of mind."

#### CLIMBING MOUNT —

- I. Introduction: Equipment necessary for the rough going and the cold
- II. Body: From dawn to evening
  1. Surprising distance to the foot of the mountain
  2. Easy going, up to the timber line
  3. Crossing the rocks from timber to snow
  4. Some of the dangers in the last stage
  5. The brief view and the long return
- III. Conclusion: "The game worth the candle."

## MY FIRST SUMMER AT — MILITARY ACADEMY

- I. Introduction : Chilling experiences upon arrival
- II. Body : Camp discipline
  1. Formalities of camp life
    - a. The drills from dawn to dark
    - b. My own duties as trumpeter
  2. Discipline of a more trying sort
    - a. Hazing by the older men
    - b. My dislike of the whole situation
      - (1) Resolve to "get even" after the session
      - (2) Weary eagerness for the end
  - III. Conclusion : A surprising change of mind
    1. Friendly feeling for my tormentors
    2. Great regret upon leaving

When the subjects undertaken are more complex, the problem of arranging the statement naturally becomes more difficult. Suppose, for example, a student is planning to write on "The Secret Societies in — High Schools," with the plan of interpreting facts with which he has become acquainted at first hand ; and suppose that he has decided that for evident reasons they are doomed to extinction. Obviously he can begin by reference either to the "gang," or club, instinct which is universal or to some recent event or newspaper comment. With this point determined on and with beginning and end in mind, he is fairly certain of securing unity in his composition. His next real task is to marshal his ideas and try to get them into line. Dreamy meditation will accomplish nothing ; but if he will sit up alertly and with pen or pencil in hand record his ideas as they come to mind, it need be only a few minutes before he has at least the beginnings of a list of topics with which he can set definitely to work.

**The use of casual jottings.** They come to him casually, just as they arise in conversation, and it is his business to put them in order as they might appear in a political speech or a lecture. If he puts down his topics exactly as they occur to him, they will fall in some such order as the following :

1. Fraternity boys debarred from —— team
2. They neglect their studies
3. The societies are undesirable
4. The members are extravagant
5. A large number have been expelled from schools
6. They are snobbish
7. The opposition is too strong for them

This, of course, is a kind of hodgepodge. The successive topics are quite clearly connected by casual accidents of thought, but, also quite evidently, are without any construction at all. It is the writer's business, then, to make them logically coherent, and to do this he may at once apply the first principle of coherence — that ideas which are connected in thought should be kept together and ideas which are unconnected should be kept apart. If he examines the list he can see that the jottings can be put into a few groups. For example, numbers 3, 4, 6, and 2 may be arranged in this fashion :

- Undesirable features of the societies
- Formation of extravagant habits
- Cultivation of snobbishness
- Tendency to neglect of studies

Further, it becomes clear that certain other topics, such as 1 and 5 with still others not mentioned, will fall under the general heading "The process of rooting out the societies," and that 7 is the conclusion. This simple process results easily in a rearrangement of the first random list in the following form :

## THE SECRET SOCIETIES IN — HIGH SCHOOLS

- I. Introduction : A natural result of social instinct
- II. Body
  1. Undesirable features of the societies
    - a. Formation of extravagant habits
    - b. Cultivation of snobbishness
    - c. Tendency to neglect of studies
  2. The process of rooting out the societies
    - a. Restrictive regulations within the schools
      - (1) Members debarred from athletic teams
      - (2) Members debarred from other school organizations
    - b. Refusal to admit members to the schools
- III. Conclusion : Campaign nearing a successful completion

With a subject involving study, wide observation, and an ability to weigh and balance ideas, the process of planning is nothing but an extension of these simpler ones already outlined. No matter how complex the theme the simple preliminary list will always serve as a point of departure, and the steps which follow are in principle the same. An illustration may be drawn from such a subject as "The Progressive Republican Movement." A student might possibly decide that, although the whole movement is vividly interesting, it does not affect him deeply, partly because he sees no immediate bearing on the affairs of himself and his family, and partly because he is not yet of voting age. A natural opening would be through an allusion to some near or remote political event. The first jottings might occur in such an order as this :

1. Effect on labor	7. Increasing strength of Democrats
2. Attitude of labor	8. Referendum, initiative, and recall
3. High cost of living	9. Regulation of business
4. La Follette	10. Early developments
5. Roosevelt	11. Dangers to Republican party
6. Tariff commission	12. The issues

The grouping of the topics would then follow. Numbers 12, 6, 9, and 8 may be arranged in this fashion :

The issues :

- a. The appointment of a permanent tariff commission
- b. Government regulation of business
- c. The extension of the popular vote
  - (1) The referendum and initiative
  - (2) The recall of the judiciary

Further, it becomes clear that certain other topics, such as numbers 3 and 10, would come together, with others not yet mentioned, under the head of "Causes and Growth of the Movement"; that numbers 4 and 5 give the names of "Competitors for the Leadership"; that number 11 is a general heading of which 7 may become one division; and that until the vague term *labor* in numbers 1 and 2 is further qualified these topics are more confusing than helpful, since in the first instance it could be taken to mean the *laboring man*, and in the second it might more likely denote *organized labor*.

**Rearrangement and elimination.** Vague as these observations are, the outlines of a possible composition do nevertheless already begin to appear, like the first faint suggestions on a photographic plate. Between the opening and closing passages, which have already been suggested, the body of the theme may very possibly include some treatment of the following divisions :

- Causes and growth of the movement
- The policies for which it contended
- Rivals for leadership
- Possible consequences

At this stage of affairs there is great danger of aimless and ineffective treatment of one of these after another. The

whole contrivance may drift along on a hopeless sea of words unless the writer remembers he has a point to steer for: "This is all very interesting, but it does not affect me." If he is to give his best energy to a discussion of effect, he must evidently spend but little time on the historical, personal, and picturesque phases of the subject. The real gist of it all will lie in

The policies of the Progressives *and*  
The possible consequences of the movement.

and the degree to which these matters affect him in any intimate way.

Now, the thinking already done will submit to some such formulation as the following :

I. The policies of the Progressives

1. Indicated by their attitude toward the "old-line" Republicans (illustrations drawn from action in Congress and state legislatures, from public speeches, and so on)
2. Indicated by the issues raised
  - a. The permanent tariff commission
  - b. Government regulation of business
    - (1) With reference to banking credit
    - (2) With reference to trusts
    - (3) With reference to industrial legislation
  - c. Extension of the popular vote
    - (1) The initiative and the referendum
    - (2) The recall of the judiciary

II. Possible consequences of the movement

1. With reference to the division of the principal parties
2. With reference to the financial and industrial welfare of the country

It remains to provide an introduction by reference to some leader or event, and to indicate in conclusion that the subject

is one of general interest even though rather remote and "academic" to the average freshman.

If this is in any degree representative of how a composition may be a matter of foresight, it is evident that a genuine plan, or advance outline, can be made only by dint of a certain amount of real thinking. In all of these examples there appear two features most desirable in such outlines; they should be reasonably brief, and they should nevertheless be definite enough to show what thinking has already been done.

**Brevity in an advance plan.** The outline should be reasonably brief in the first place because it is but a preliminary to the completed theme. It should serve only as a kind of tourist map, and the pedestrian should have the privilege of following it when it serves him well and abandoning it when he finds a better way for himself. Very frequently, even in the case of carefully devised plans, certain divisions that seemed in prospect to promise equal fruitfulness turn out to be quite unequal in importance. In such a case it is of course absurd to pretend that they are equal in spite of the facts. Sometimes, in the momentum of writing, new ideas come to the mind, better than any included in the outline. They ought of course to be expanded. But even though these variations and modifications are introduced, the experimental plan will probably dominate nine compositions out of ten and insure better proportion than happy accident would have done. The preconceived plan insures Clearness in the final product; the fresh and vivid parts that are introduced as the composition is in progress will make for increased Interest. If the plan is so full that writing the composition is hardly more than restating the topics in sentence form and adding an adjective or adverb here and there, the chances are that the life will all have

been planned out of it and that the result will be stale, flat, and unprofitable.

**Definiteness in an advance plan.** Yet there is a danger in too great brevity, for the plan should not be so compressed as to have no individual quality. It should be definite (and hence full) enough to give evidence of past thinking and not a mere promise, all too vague, of future thought. A good test for the student to put, if he is in doubt as to whether the outline is definite enough, is to ask himself this question : " Could any other member of the class write a composition on this outline ? " If the answer is " Yes, " the chances are that, even if he has done some thinking, he has shown no real evidence of it in the preliminary plan. Here is an example of this sort :

#### MY NEIGHBORHOOD

- I. Introduction : Why I chose this subject
- II. Body
  - 1. The location of the neighborhood in general
  - 2. The occupations of the residents
  - 3. The effect of the occupations on their characters
  - 4. The consequent character of the neighborhood
- III. Conclusion : General summary

Put into the proper hands, this vague outline might be converted into an extremely vivid and interesting theme ; in unskillful hands, the final product might be entirely colorless. From the unsupported promise of what is given here, there is no ground for even a fair speculation as to the outcome. In fact, this brief scheme might reasonably be presented to an entire class as a theme assignment ; for it would apply equally well for a factory district, a wealthy neighborhood

populated by captains of industry, the Board Walk at Atlantic City, or a farming community. Instead of leaving something to the imagination, as a reasonable outline should, it leaves everything to it.

#### INTEREST RESIDENT IN DETAIL SUBJECT MATTER

All this is good in its way, but all of it is preliminary to the real business of writing. Planning makes for Clearness, as has been said, but has little to do with the achievement of Interest. This quality, although elusive in some respects and most effective when most spontaneous, may still be deliberately sought in the handling of the detail and, with varying degrees of success, deliberately gained.

**Avoidance of vague generalization.** First of all, there are certain kinds of defects which are almost certain to kill Interest. One of these is the defect of vague generalization. It has already been pointed out that the inexperienced writer is too apt to adopt vague abstractions for his subject; but it is a further fault of the amateur that, even with a definite theme in hand, he is all too inclined to expound it in gingerly platitudes. Many freshman compositions read like many summer-hotel advertisements, and for the same reason — that their authors are not used to expressing themselves on paper.

If one is actually trying to learn something about a prospective summer hostelry, it is baffling to read that it is located on the highest body of navigable water between the Atlantic Ocean and the Rocky Mountains; that it commands an unrivaled view from its ample porches; that its cuisine is of the finest; and that nature and man have combined to make it an ideal sojourning place for the tired worker. These generous phrases mean no more to the inquirer than do the further

allegations that the prices are reasonable and the service absolutely first-class in every particular. It is *particulars* that the reader is hankering for. He would like to know how high this highest body of navigable water is, and what navigates it ; what sort of view of land and lake is visible ; what the prices are, and where the servants come from. He may have his ideas on the comparative efficiency of a Florida hotel staff brought up in a body for Northern summer duty and a genial aggregation of college pick-ups out for a vacation lark and their expenses.

**Avoidance of vague " literary " phrasing.** This kind of haziness, moreover, is frequently caused by a feeling in the background of the writer's mind that when he takes his pen in hand he must write in a literary style. His assumption is that the literary effect is to be produced by the use of sonorous and grandiloquent phrases, but these are phrases which he has not coined himself ; they are familiar through his often having heard and read them, and their very familiarity arises from their vague adaptability to all sorts of ideas and their consequent lack of precision. This type of rhetorical pomposity finds its way into print in cases where the blue pencil of the editor fails to restrain the fine frenzy of the ecstatic reporter.

It was a " midwinter night's dream " last evening at the splendid *salons de luxe* of the Athelstan club when this notable association of good fellows — courtly, chivalrous, and distinguished hospitalities — outdistanced other brilliant affairs at their beautiful midwinter ball. Though the calendar read January, the glorious Indian summer that prevails at mellow intervals all winter long brought a more joyous season, a veritable time of roses, into the splendidly set festival rooms of the club. All the pretty buds were there, with dimpled arms clasped about regular sheafs of flowers, while the most piquantly charming flower maid of them all, winsome —,

opened the ball. She seemed Titania's own representative from the court of the fays, with her shimmering white and silver robes to set off the gold of her hair, the blue of her starry eyes, and the rose leaf of her complexion, while she carried pink roses. Her cavalier was ——, whose name is one whereby to conjure the chivalry and courtliness of a bygone time, as every one knows in recalling gracious memories of his distinguished grandfather, Dr. ——.

**Avoidance of rash superlatives.** If one learns to avoid this sort of hazy "literary" expression, it will be easier to avoid also the sweeping superlatives and universal statements which belong to youthful writers. There are few cases in which superlatives are exactly applicable. Three schoolgirls, seeing an ordinarily amusing episode, will report that it was the funniest thing they ever saw, they never heard anything to beat it, and they nearly died laughing. The listener discounts these remarks, hardly hearing them at all and, except in the rarest instances, never taking them at their face value; but when the theme writer uses a similar kind of debased coin, he does not get off so lightly at the hands of the reader. By common consent a statement in writing or in print is yielded a certain amount of respect. It is supposed to be somewhat deliberate and calculated, and when it is evident exaggeration the disapproval of the reader is visited upon the guilty writer, who is discredited not only for inaccuracies of which he is actually guilty but for others of which he may be guilty. "He was careless twice that I know of," says the accuser, "I wonder if he is ever scrupulous." Finally, — for the same reason and more exactly under the head of subject matter rather than diction, — Interest in a composition can be maintained only by the writer who avoids not only rash superlatives but all other careless violations of fact. We will not long give our attention to a writer in whom we have no confidence.

Thus, as far as the contents of an orderly composition are concerned, the chief virtue may lie in its simple and unaffected presentation of fairly accurate detail. This definite, concrete, verifiable material should be the natural, as it surely is the logical, outgrowth of first-hand experience or of careful and fruitful reading.

**Selection of vivid detail.** It is in the selection of the bricks and mortar of a theme that the personal quality of the author appears, quite as much as in the style itself. Mark Twain, Jane Addams, and Viscount Bryce — to use well-known contemporary illustrations — have each a characteristic style and rhythm, but no less evidently does each have an individual type of detail material. That of Bryce is perhaps most bookish in quality — based on a wise and conscious observation of the broad aspects of social life. His mood is generous and genial, his pictures are clear and exact. They illustrate events in the recent past of Washington, or New York, or London, and show from the statesman's point of view how men of influence and power behave together and how they regard the great mass of the voting population. Miss Addams deals, too, with big conceptions, but they are seen from a quite different point of view and illustrated by graphic pictures of the unsuccessful and the downtrodden. She writes of individuals and sympathizes with them or protests against them and their ways. Mark Twain is usually interested in human nature rather than in government or human institutions. He is hardly conscious of whether people are fortunate or unfortunate as he offers homely, domestic, personal glimpses of the life of people in his neighborhood, seldom in his best-known books indulging in flights into the past or in discussions of the nature of human justice.

As it is not our business now, however, to imitate in detail the characteristics of individual authors, a reference to these would be a waste of time if the same deductions could not be made of writers whether amateur or professional. A fuller discussion of this important element of Interest-giving detail must be deferred to Chapters III and VIII (see pp. 57-68 and 227-240).

#### CLEARNESS ASSURED BY THE CONCLUSION

**Need of deliberate ending.** In the process of actual writing, when the introduction and the body of the theme have been disposed of, nothing remains but to conclude. The word, by derivation, suggests what the closing portion of the theme should do, which is to close up, or changing the figure, to round out. This is for the inexperienced a really difficult matter. The average theme is very likely to peter out badly toward the end. What should be the last half of a large proportion of narrative themes is huddled together into an eighth or a tenth, and in expository compositions the zeal of the writer is apt to expend itself on the early parts of the body so that the latter divisions are badly slighted. Such themes are not concluded or even ended. They are simply interrupted. Yet, for the effect upon the reader, it is as important in a piece of writing as it is in any athletic event to finish strongly.

The real conclusion for any composition, as was stated in the beginning of the chapter, should be determined by the selection of the point of the composition. It should contain in itself the answer to a possible question, "Why was this theme ever written?" If the forethought of the writer has moved in advance to the conclusion, and if the contents of the

composition have been actually decided by the coming conclusion, the problem in the writer's mind at the end, therefore, is not to think up or find out what to say but simply to devise the best way of saying what was decided on before ever the introduction was started.

**Danger of too elaborate an ending.** To phrase the obvious conclusion in the most effective way is a matter of fine tactics. It should be done with the reader constantly in mind. It is no less of a mistake to say too much at the ending than to say too little. To indulge in elaborate and pompous rhetorical flourishes in the last paragraphs is likely to be as painful to the reader as it is for a hostess to have a caller stand in the doorway on a cold winter day for several minutes after she should have taken her leave.

On the other hand, to stop abruptly with the attention riveted on the last detail and no general idea of the theme in mind is quite as unfortunate. For under such circumstances, the reader must either glance back over the preceding pages or lay the work down with a fragmentary and incomplete impression. There are various ways of arriving at what may be called a legitimate conclusion.

**Omitting explicit conclusion.** It may be that a skillful treatment has led by logical steps to a point where the composition is clearly closed up and rounded out, and where, in the judgment of the writer, no formal conclusion is necessary. This is the sort which is easily found in the well-told story. With the last event the story is completed, and any added commentary will be not only unnecessary but an actual blemish.

**Informal recapitulation.** It may be that an informal recapitulation is desirable. The various main divisions have each been clear, but a rough restatement of them leaves

them fresh in the reader's mind. This sort of ending is likely to be found in newspaper editorials and in many magazine articles of informal composition.

**Formal summary.** Finally, a formal summary of the sort found in each of the chapters of this book may be desirable. This is more likely to be found in pieces of formal exposition and in argumentative writing of some length and seriousness. In an ordinary college theme of a few hundred words, such a conclusion is apt to overbalance the work as the drum major's helmet would one of the small fifers in the military band. In long theses or term papers, and in special reports of two or three thousand words each, such a formal summary is likely to be the most effective conclusion.

In general, the same comment can be made upon the conclusion as upon the introduction, but with greater emphasis. In the mastery of the theme it should be of very great importance to the writer; he should have it continually in mind; it should govern the order of his material and the selection of his detail; but when the end of the theme is actually reached, the writer should be free, if it seems wise, to omit it in any formal shape. The neglect of a conclusion is a fault serious enough to rob a composition of all effectiveness. To omit it or to reduce it to lowest proportions may, on the other hand, under some circumstances result in an actual gain of strength.

#### EXERCISE

Read the three quoted conclusions. One ends with an informal statement of the point, one with a paragraph more nearly in the nature of a summary, one with a conclusion pertinent to a biographical survey. Note also, and analyze, the conclusions to longer quotations on pp. 234, 236, and 240.

## IN PRAISE OF POLITICIANS

As the true sequence of events becomes plain, History revises our judgments in regard to political sagacity. We begin to see who were the leaders, and who were the blindly led. There have been martyrs who in the hour of their agony have been far-seeing politicians. They have been sustained not so much by a beatific vision as by their clear foresight of the public consequences of the blunder of their adversaries. They have calculated the force of the revulsion of feeling that was sure to follow an act of cruel injustice. It was in this mood that heroic Hugh Latimer watched the fagots that were being piled around him. "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Latimer's words were justified by the events. Those martyr fires, manfully endured, determined the policy of the nation. Here good politics and good ethics are one. No cause has ever triumphed through clever management alone. There is always need for the leader, who, without regard to what may happen to himself, is resolved to play the man. — SAMUEL MCCORD CROTHERS, "Among Friends"

## THE PURITAN SPIRIT

So in the civilization of the country has New England been a pioneer, and so deeply upon American life and institutions has the genius of New England impressed itself that in the great civil war the peculiar name of the New-Englander, the Yankee, became the distinguishing title of the soldier of the Union; the national cause was the Yankee cause; and a son of the West, born in Kentucky and a citizen of Illinois, who had never seen New England twice in his life, became the chief representative Yankee, and with his hand, strong with the will of the people, the Puritan principle of liberty and equal rights broke the chains of a race. New England characteristics have become national qualities. The blood of New England flows with energizing, modifying, progressive power in the veins of every State; and the undaunted spirit of the Puritan, *sic semper tyrannis*, animates the continent from sea to sea. — GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, "Orations and Addresses"

## JOSEPH ADDISON

Commend me to this dear preacher without orders — this parson in the tye-wig. When this man looks from the world, whose weaknesses he describes so benevolently, up to the Heaven which shines over us all, I can hardly fancy a human face lighted up with a more serene rapture: a human intellect thrilling with a purer love and adoration than Joseph Addison's. Listen to him: from your childhood you have known the verses: but who can hear their sacred music without love and awe?

" Soon as the evening shades prevail,  
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,  
And nightly to the listening earth  
Repeats the story of her birth;  
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,  
And all the planets in their turn,  
Confirm the tidings as they roll,  
And spread the truth from pole to pole. . . .  
For ever singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us is divine."

It seems to me those verses shine like the stars. They shine out of a great deep calm. When he turns to Heaven a Sabbath comes over that man's mind: and his face lights up from it with a glory of thanks and prayer. His sense of religion stirs through his whole being. In the fields, in the town: looking at the birds in the trees: at the children in the streets: in the morning or in the moonlight: over his books in his own room: in a happy party at a country merry-making or a town assembly, good-will and peace to God's creatures, and love and awe of Him who made them, fill his pure heart and shine from his kind face. If Swift's life was the most wretched, I think Addison's was one of the most enviable. A life prosperous and beautiful — a calm death — an immense fame and affection afterwards for his happy and spotless name. — W. M. THACKERAY, "The English Humorists"

## CHAPTER III

### THE PARAGRAPH

*Facts true of the paragraph in general.* The paragraph a recent invention. The paragraph an effective piece of punctuation. The paragraph subject to usage. The paragraph reducible to a topic sentence.

*The paragraph as an independent unit.* Elaboration of the central topic for Clearness. Elaboration of the central topic for Interest. Skill acquired through practice and reading.

*The paragraph as a dependent unit.* Length and number relative to whole composition. The use of beginnings and endings for emphasis. Paragraph emphasis in the didactic essay. Emphasis in the editorial paragraph. Paragraph emphasis in the literary essay. The use of beginnings and endings for theme coherence.

#### FACTS TRUE OF THE PARAGRAPH IN GENERAL

**The paragraph a recent invention.** The history of English literature shows that the prose paragraph is the most recently developed unit of literary composition as well as the most vigorous device in punctuation. The expensive manuscripts of early days, before the invention of printing, crowded sentences and paragraphs together in closest compression. Various steps in punctuation led first to the introduction of dots between successive words and later to the introduction of capital letters at the beginnings of sentences; but the next step was rather a decorative than a logical one, for the illumination of initial letters often threw a great deal of emphasis on a very unimportant word, simply because it happened to be the first on the page. Up to 1600 a printed page of essay or prose narrative was still more often than not a solid block

of print, except for the demarcation between successive words and successive sentences ; and the publication of the King James Bible, although it introduced a broken page, did not contribute much toward the evolution of the paragraph. In this work the verses were printed as paragraphs, to facilitate the use of the Scriptures for responsive reading in worship, with the result that the paragraph marks which are usually employed (¶) escape both the eye and the attention of all but the very discriminating.

**The paragraph an effective piece of punctuation.** It is because the deep indentation of the line does catch both eye and attention that the paragraph, as now printed, is an effective piece of punctuation. It takes its place without question in the series of which the comma is the humblest member. In proportion as the reader's attention needs some aid and in proportion with the right extended him to pause and summarize his impressions, the comma, the semicolon, and the colon lead up to the period. The period has as alternative marks the interrogation and exclamation points. The paragraph indentation follows next in the series, and even after this the descriptive heading frequently used at the heads of pages, the chapter division, and the actual separation of a work into volumes may be said to be more emphatic marks of punctuation.

**The paragraph subject to usage.** The paragraph is more subject to usage than the whole composition, but to a degree far less than are the sentence and the word. It is supposed to have a unity of its own and to contribute by what it offers to the unity of the whole composition ; it is supposed to be presented in such a way that its mass, or emphasis, shall be clear, and clearly related to the whole composition ; and it is

supposed to be coherently developed out of details which hang together in evident and consecutive relationship. Yet all these demands upon the paragraph are rather loosely imposed, so that the free discretion of the author is little restricted.

**The paragraph reducible to a topic sentence.** The one test to which the paragraph must be subject is that it shall be reducible to a single brief sentence, or topic. Yet immediately upon making this generalization, it should be said that this topic sentence, or central topic, may legitimately appear at almost any place in the paragraph, or may be implied in it and nowhere literally expressed. Frequently, particularly in expository and argumentative writing, it does appear at the very beginning, but it is sometimes at the middle and sometimes at the end. Hardly less often, and more frequently than not in narrative and descriptive writing, a definite topic sentence is nowhere stated, although the unity of the paragraph is evident at a glance and may be preserved with admirable effect. Thus, important as they are, only the most general precepts may be laid down as essential to paragraph structure or paragraph unity.

#### THE PARAGRAPH AS AN INDEPENDENT UNIT

All of these demands, it is evident, apply to the paragraph in two aspects: first, as a unit of composition which may be tested as an independent product; and second, as a division in sustained discourse. There is much room for study of the single independent paragraph. Any paragraph in consecutive discourse may be analyzed from this point of view, but the paragraph as an isolated unit may also be studied in the pages of every daily paper. Moreover, in that type of

oral discourse which really deserves the name of conversation — the kind of talk in which speakers are exchanging ideas and not merely civilities — each speech is in all essentials an independent paragraph. It is hard to catch and recognize these by ear. In modern printed drama we may test them by both ear and eye. In the following dialogue the three speeches by Dr. Stockmann (they are more than remarks) will serve as illustrations.

HORSTER. Oh, that was all right. I am tolerably able-bodied, you know; and those fellows' bark is worse than their bite.

DR. STOCKMANN. Yes, is n't it extraordinary, this piggish cowardice? Come here, and let me show you something! Look, here are all the stones they threw in at us. Only look at them! Upon my soul there are n't more than two decent-sized lumps in the whole heap; the rest are nothing but pebbles — mere gravel. They stood down there, and yelled, and swore they'd half kill me; — but as for really doing it — no, there's mighty little fear of that in this town!

HORSTER. You may thank your stars for that this time, Doctor.

DR. STOCKMANN. So I do, of course. But it's depressing all the same; for if ever it should come to a serious national struggle, you may be sure that public opinion would be for taking to its heels, and the compact majority would scamper for their lives like a flock of sheep, Captain Horster. That is what's so melancholy to think of; it grieves me to the heart. — But deuce take it — it's foolish of me to feel anything of the sort! They have called me an enemy of the people; well then, let me be an enemy of the people!

MRS. STOCKMANN. That you'll never be, Thomas.

DR. STOCKMANN. You'd better not take your oath of it, Katrina. A bad name may act like a pin-scratch in the lung. And that confounded word — I can't get rid of it; it has sunk deep into my heart; and there it lies gnawing and sucking like an acid. And no magnesia can cure me. — HENRIK IBSEN, "An Enemy of the People," Act V

**Elaboration of the central topic for Clearness.** Each of these three paragraphs uttered by Dr. Stockmann is reducible to a brief topic sentence. The first is stated in a preceding

speech: "Those fellows' bark is worse than their bite." The second is clear, but must be derived from the details: "I have no respect either for their courage or their disapproval." The third is contained in the speech itself: "A bad name may act like a pin-scratch in the lung." And each illustrates what is always true—that if the paragraph is so unified that it may be reduced to a sentence, this topic sentence is relatively general and the bulk of the paragraph is made up of relatively detailed material. There are many formal rhetorical names given for the different methods of elaborating the topic sentence into a complete paragraph, but the same principles underlie all the processes. In one way or another the lesser units in the paragraph enforce, establish, qualify the main topic with which it deals, whatever the form of discourse may be.

*By literal means in description.* This is true in a descriptive paragraph. The simplest method of development is by means of one detail statement after another, each one of which is direct and literal—not indirectly suggestive and not figurative. Suppose, for instance, it is a description of a vast audience and made for the purpose of suggesting how completely the individual is lost in the crowd. The details accumulate around this thought. They may deal with the murmur of thousands of voices merged into one inarticulate hum, and with the movements of thousands of feet, hands, fans, and so on, mingling in a composite sound. They may deal with the multitudinous aggregation of little units; with the way in which thousands of white faces extend out before the speaker without giving any impression of the individuals behind them. Abundant other details may follow, each of them a particular elaboration of the general point.

*By literal means in narration.* The same method of accumulating pertinent literal details is effective in a paragraph of narrative; as, for instance, in one discussing the speed of a motor car and the danger attending it. This could present the great power concentrated in the weight of a heavy car with a party of travelers; the possibility of skidding on a muddy road, of overturning in a gutter, of collision with other vehicles, of accident to the steering gear or other machinery, of the necessity for quick action in avoiding an animal or child in the roadway — each of these a literal and direct detail bearing on the general point as a specific party was darting along a definite country road on a given summer day.

*By literal means in exposition or argument.* Again, the same method would apply in a paragraph of exposition or argument. Suppose one were attempting to give an idea of what indirect taxation is — the sort of taxation in which the individual purchaser pays his tribute to the government through the raised price made necessary by import duties. He could show on imported gloves how the American pays tremendously more than the Englishman; on domestic-made articles how he is forced to pay far more than cost through the imposition of a protective tariff; on natural resources, not manufactured at all, how he needs to pay more than the man across the Canadian or Mexican border; on distilled liquors how, for revenue purposes, the price in every instance is largely augmented above the cost of production — each detail being an illustration of the general fact of the purchaser's paying indirectly to the government through the increased price on the article consumed.

**EXERCISES**

*A.* Examine and analyze the four following paragraphs. The first begins with a brief topic sentence and enforces it by a series of details. The second develops a topic sentence by one detailed typical example. The third is developed by means of two ideas each illustrated in detail. The topic of the last is a complex one, contained in the first and fourth sentences and elaborated in two ways.

He was a perfectly normal, healthy boy. Fortunately there are no brilliant sayings to record; he did not lisp in periods. Genius was not written upon his brow, nor tied upon his sleeve. He had none of the pale fervor of precocity, or the shyness of premature conceit. He was absorbed in childish things, loved play, shirked his studies, dreamed of a life on the ocean wave, and regarded "Robinson Crusoe" and "Sinbad the Sailor" as the end of all literary things. The savagery of boyhood he lacked. He was fond of playing battle, but could not bear to see his playfellows publicly thrashed, according to the amiable custom of that day. Otherwise he was all that a mother might deplore or an uncle delight in.—H. W. BOYNTON, "Washington Irving"

... Even death itself sometimes fails to bring the dignity and serenity which one would fain associate with old age. I recall the dying hour of one old Scotchwoman whose long struggle to "keep respectable" had so embittered her, that her last words were gibes and taunts for those who were trying to minister to her. "So you came in yourself this morning, did you? You only sent things yesterday. I guess you knew when the doctor was coming. Don't try to warm my feet with anything but that old jacket that I've got there; it belonged to my boy who was drowned at sea nigh thirty years ago, but it's warmer yet with human feelings than any of your damned charity hot-water bottles." Suddenly the harsh gasping voice was stilled in death and I awaited the doctor's coming, shaken and horrified.—JANE ADDAMS, "Twenty Years at Hull-House"

We went early, to get a seat where we could see Emerson, and were struck with the character of his audience, most of whom we knew by repute. We doubt whether any man, but this lecturer, could draw together so varied an assemblage, and yet probably none were there who had not a point of contact with the mind they came to enjoy. Mr. Charles King was there, with his combined likeness to Aristotle and Epicurus; Mrs. Kirkland, with her fine-chiselled aristocratic features and warm bright eye; Mr. Andrew Jackson Davis, the Revelations-man, looking as if thought had never left a footprint on his apprentice face; Miss Sedgwick, with thought and care stranded on the beach of her countenance by the ebb of youth; Mr. Greeley, with his face fenced in by regularity and culture, while the rest of him is left "in open common"; half a dozen men who live for Committees and influence; six or eight of the artists who are painting away the time till the millennium comes; several unappreciated poets; one or two strong-minded wealthy men who are laying up a reserve of intellect against what Capt. Cuttle calls a "rewarse": and, as well as we could see, few or no ordinary people. If Emerson would come to New York, and invite just that audience to gather around him and form a congregation of Listeners-to-reason, with or without pulpit, we are very sure that he might become the centre of a very well-chosen society.—N. P. WILLIS, "Hurry-Graphs"

Differences of course there are between the human type as developed in different regions of the country,—differences moral and intellectual as well as physical. You can generally tell a Southerner by his look as well as his speech. A native of Maine will probably differ from a native of Kentucky, a Georgian from an Oregonian. But these differences strike even an American observer much as the difference between a Yorkshireman and a Lancastrian strikes the English, and are slighter than the contrast between a middle-class southern Englishman and a middle-class Scotchman, slighter than the difference between a peasant from Northumberland and a peasant from Dorsetshire. Or, to take another way of putting it: If at some great gathering of a political party from all parts of the United Kingdom you were to go round and talk to, say, one hundred, taken at random, of the persons present, you would be struck by more diversity between the notions and the tastes and mental

habits of the individuals comprising that one hundred than if you tried the same experiment with a hundred Americans of the same education and position, similarly gathered in a convention from every State of the Union. — JAMES BRYCE, "The American Commonwealth"

*B.* Write paragraphs developing the following topics by the use of literal detail :

The crowd was enormous (*or* pitifully small).

The cathedral was apparently deserted (*or* crowded to the doors).

The room was bare as a barracks (*or* luxuriously furnished).

The railway terminal was a scene of confusion (*or* smoothly managed in every detail).

The instructor was evidently perplexed (*or* annoyed *or* pleased).

The noise increased (*or* continued *or* died away).

The train gathered speed (*or* slowed down imperceptibly).

I suddenly became conscious that I was alone (*or* there was some one else in the room).

The process of registration is simple (*or* complex).

Reading history is far more play than work (*or* vice versa).

Embarrassment is a sign of inexperience (*or* timidity).

Good manners are a proof of good character (*or* are only skin deep).

**Elaboration of the central topic for Interest.** It is possible to develop paragraphs by means of the processes described above and to make them quite clear, but at the same time to make them comparatively uninteresting. Methods of developing the paragraph which are likely to catch and hold the reader's interest are worthy of some study by themselves. The development of paragraphs by means of literal detail is the simplest method of elaboration; but whether the methods be simple, literal, and direct (as discussed above) or more complicated (as in those to follow), in every case certain general characteristics should distinguish the elaborative material. *It should be intelligible.* The reader for whom it is devised should

be able to understand it through his "knowledge on hand." It should not be phrased in such technical language as to be confusing rather than illuminating. In connection with the motor or with government revenue one can see how, by recondite allusions to the machinery of a gasoline engine or to the intricacies of the taxation system, a general mystification could be produced in the mind of the reader. *This elaborate detail should be humanly interesting.* It should have the quality of appealing to the imagination and falling back on the experiences of the average reader. *It should in all cases where possible be picturesque.* The average mind works in terms of mental images, and wherever these can be turned to account, the writer has one of the greatest of resources at his disposal.

*The use of allusion.* The richest treasure house of just such material is the average man's general knowledge of men and things. An allusion to some fact familiar to writer and reader, speaker and listener, puts them on a common footing. Different cities have such definite characteristics that adjectives formed from them are at once exact and suggestive. Such are *Parisian* gaiety or *Bostonian* precision. Localities have the same force in allusion. *Oriental*, *arctic*, *alpine*, *tropical*, even *rural* and *suburban*, derive their force from the knowledge of the reader. Allusions to types of men are effective because they say much in little. To say of a man that he is a *czar*, a *deacon*, a *highwayman*, or a *slave driver* is to assert in a word what a sentence could not fully elaborate. So each of the following, as well as many others, has its value for purposes of allusion: characters in history like Socrates, Cæsar, Herod, Luther, Richard III, Cromwell, Napoleon; periods in history like the Age of Pericles, the

Protectorate, the Reign of Terror ; institutions in history like the Inquisition, the Knights Templars, the Long Parliament, the Star Chamber ; events in history like the battle of Thermopylæ, or the First Crusade, or the defeat of the Armada, or the Boston Tea Party, or the assassination of Lincoln. We do say of an overwhelming defeat that it was a *Waterloo*, and in athletic parlance a twenty-six-mile run is a *Marathon*, but in general too little advantage is taken of all this wealth of material in giving point to oral and spoken discourse.

Allusions to similar facts in literature are often more significant than references to history. Homer, the Bible, Shakespeare, Dickens, supply a few familiar names to everyone, and hundreds of suggestive people and passages to the well informed. Ulysses, Samson, Romeo, Uriah Heep, are more real to the average man than many of his neighbors, and allusions to them would be understood by those very neighbors whom he does not know. Whenever such references can be turned to account, the writer has again a most valuable resource at his disposal.

The following paragraph from Macaulay's essay on Milton shows the effectiveness of abundant allusion to facts of common knowledge :

Logicians may reason about abstractions. But the great mass of men must have images. The strong tendency of the multitude in all ages and nations to idolatry can be explained on no other principle. The first inhabitants of Greece, there is reason to believe, worshipped one invisible Deity. But the necessity of having something more definite to adore produced, in a few centuries, the innumerable crowd of Gods and Goddesses. In like manner the ancient Persians thought it impious to exhibit the Creator under a human form. Yet even these transferred to the Sun the worship which, in speculation, they considered due only to the Supreme Mind. The History of the Jews is the record of a continued struggle

between pure Theism, supported by the most terrible sanctions, and the strangely fascinating desire of having some visible and tangible object of adoration. Perhaps none of the secondary causes which Gibbon has assigned for the rapidity with which Christianity spread over the world, while Judaism scarcely ever acquired a proselyte, operated more powerfully than this feeling. God, the uncreated, the incomprehensible, the invisible, attracted few worshippers. A philosopher might admire so noble a conception: but the crowd turned away in disgust from words which presented no image to their minds. It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the Synagogue, and the doubts of the Academy, and the pride of the portico, and the fasces of the Lictor, and the swords of thirty legions, were humbled in the dust. Soon after Christianity had achieved its triumph, the principle which had assisted it began to corrupt it. It became a new Paganism. Patron saints assumed the offices of household gods. St. George took the place of Mars. St. Elmo consoled the mariner for the loss of Castor and Pollux. The Virgin Mother and Cecilia succeeded to Venus and the Muses. The fascination of sex and loveliness was again joined to that of celestial dignity; and the homage of chivalry was blended with that of religion. Reformers have often made a stand against these feelings; but never with more than apparent and partial success. The men who demolished the images in Cathedrals have not always been able to demolish those which were enshrined in their minds. It would not be difficult to show that in politics the same rule holds good. Doctrines, we are afraid, must generally be embodied before they can excite a strong public feeling. The multitude is more easily interested for the most unmeaning badge, or the most insignificant name, than for the most important principle.

*The use of literal comparison.* Thus, in elaborating a paragraph, literal but indirect methods may be used. It is possible to make what you are writing about clear by referring to what you are not writing about. Suppose, again, that a big audience is being described. The hum of voices, already

mentioned, may be likened to wind in pine trees, to the roar of the surf, to the tumult of a city street; the sight of the thousands of faces, to daisies in a meadow or to any other great collection of uniform objects. Once more, in describing the dangerous speed of the motor car, comparisons present themselves — the weight of the car to that of a traction engine or of a great projectile; the danger of overturn to that of a boat. And in the discussion of indirect taxation the whole matter could be likened to the experiences of a purchaser in a store where the difficulty of the dealer in obtaining goods is paid for by the purchaser, who meets the dealer's cost and pays him further profit. In all cases these are perfectly literal illustrations in which the thing talked about is illuminated by something literally like it, and in all cases the comparison demands the requisites of intelligibility, human interest, and picturesqueness. Similarly, the same principles could be applied to contrast instead of comparison.

*The use of figurative material.* Finally, this same method of elaborating a general point by the use of effective detail can be extended to the use of wholly figurative material. This is to be advocated with caution, for excessive use of figurative writing or too conscious employment of it is practically certain to defeat its own end. Even though the product is genuinely original, it is apt to be self-conscious and to result in a kind of cleverness which is offensive to the reader. The deliberately clever writer is as tiresome as the deliberately clever talker. The people to whom the talk or the writing is addressed become distracted from what is being said, to the manner in which it is said, and are likely to be first amused, then bored, and finally irritated. On the other hand, if the figurative material is not original, the writing which contains

overmuch of it is a tiresome imitation or echo of other people's good things. It is no more stimulative of interest than a bouquet of stale garden flowers. Yet figurative language, when not used to excess, is the basic characteristic of all good poetry and the chief source of poetic quality in good prose.

Strictures against self-consciousness in the use of figurative language should not be taken too seriously by beginners, provided self-consciousness is not accompanied by excessive use of the figurative. It is impossible to speak in a new or unfamiliar language without thinking about the process; but this may be said with all emphasis—that purely figurative language does not label itself or apologize for itself. Its virtue is in its freedom from affectation. Many a man's oral discourse is embarrassed and even blighted by his continual use of such expressions as "so to speak," "as it were," "to speak metaphorically," "if you will pardon the figure," and so on. If the figures are good ones, they will carry their message without any deprecating smiles or gestures. If they are not effective, the less attention called to them the better. Figurative language boldly states as so what is obviously not so, and leaves the evident interpretation to the reader or hearer.

1. *The simile.* The simile is the commonest device for suggestive speech—a figure which bestrides the border line between literal and figurative language. Very many good similes, as suggested in a previous paragraph, are frankly literal comparisons. Such expressions as "cried like a child," "sweet as a cow's breath," "as awkwardly as a country bumpkin," and the like, are completely literal but none the less effective, as they start the imagination of the reader at work and thus stimulate his interest. But more imaginative, and

often still more effective, are similes which point to similarity which is only suggested. "The waves were mountain high," "In the midst of the tumult he was steady as an oak," "She babbled on like a brook," are all of them gross exaggerations if taken literally. However big the ocean wave looks in a great storm, if compared in feet and inches to landscape it would not make more than a respectable hillock. No mortal has strength literally comparable to an oak, or endurance to be likened to the flow of a brook. Yet in these cases and hundreds like them the imagination does not rebel at such similes, for what they suggest is not a literal likeness between the thing described and the thing alluded to, but an apparent likeness at the moment of observation. In the midst of a storm at sea, a thousand miles from land, the waves take on an ominous grandeur; buttonholed by a loquacious woman, the listener, desirous of escape, may feel for the moment that her talk is interminable—and in these circumstances both similes convey just the meaning which they should. So the partial parallel is often more effective than the complete one. In all forms of composition this figurative speech is used, although naturally in narrative and descriptive work it prevails more than in exposition and argument. The reader of any good fiction will continually encounter it.

2. *The metaphor.* This observation on the figurative simile holds true of almost all metaphors: they are fundamentally false to the facts, but suggestively faithful to the truth. The metaphor is more difficult to employ than the simile, through the complete lack of any badge of comparison. Yet for this very reason, well employed, the metaphor is doubly effective. When Longfellow said of any evening scene, "blossomed the lovely stars," he was of course using

what the literal interpreter could object to as a wildly fanciful metaphor. The stars are not flowers ; they do not blossom ; they are not located on an even plane as in a garden ; the scale of distances between them is incalculably great ; the whole set of similarities is completely lacking when tested by the facts, yet when we test it by the illusion produced upon the mind, the stars do seem to lie as in a flower bed, close together, and at the vesper time of day to open out like flowers one by one. So Longfellow called them the "forget-me-nots of the angels," and we respond nightly to his metaphor. Thus again, when Ben Jonson wrote "Drink to me only with thine eyes," he wrote nonsense unless we appreciate that the act of drinking a health or good wishes is naturally accompanied with a kindly or friendly or affectionate glance and that therefore the spirit of the act is more definitely interpreted by the eye than by the lip. All metaphor has its rich value in the abundance of meaning behind it.

NOTE. As this book is concerned with student composition rather than with literary analysis, personification and other less common figures of speech are purposely omitted.

**Skill acquired through practice and reading.** Thus, this richness of meaning in figurative speech, when used in the elaboration of a paragraph, lends great energy to written style. It enlists the help of the reader, and insures his interest because it makes him an actual collaborator. In general it is not to be used lavishly. It should also be used scrupulously. Mixed metaphors are absurd and distracting, and any metaphor which, in its suggestive quality, is not consistent to its own idea is a disturbance. Figurative language is the spice in the dish. At its best, it needs to be applied with grace and ease. At the same time, while this sort of use is the

most difficult of practices to achieve in writing which is devised for the reading public, figurative language is not a bad kind of expression on which to practice occasionally in special exercises. It stimulates the mental powers occasionally to write a paragraph filled with similes. It is a good kind of mental gymnastics occasionally to ride a metaphor deliberately and willfully down a written page. One need no more feel that these attempts should be taken seriously or be saved for a reading public than that a musician's intricate manual exercises should be listened to by a concert audience.

An adroitness in the use of illustrative detail, comparison, contrast, simile, metaphor, and literary allusion may, moreover, be largely cultivated through the attentive reading of good literature. To note these factors in the style of the great prose and verse writers need not deaden one's reading but may actually heighten the enjoyment of their work, and this kind of heightened enjoyment in the intelligent reader of good literature is almost certain sooner or later to affect the written style of him who reads and marks what he reads.

#### EXERCISES

*A.* Examine the following illustrations for paragraph structure, and in the second case for coherence between paragraphs. How may the absence of connecting links be justified? Note in particular the use of comparison and contrast, of direct and indirect allusion to history and literature, and the abundance of simile and metaphor. What of the figurative language in the third?

It is an extraordinary fact about these grave and substantial men of New England, especially during our earliest literary age, that they all had a lurking propensity to write what they sincerely believed to be poetry, — and this, in most cases, in unconscious

defiance of the edicts of nature and of a predetermining Providence. Lady Mary Montagu said that in England, in her time, verse-making had become as common as taking snuff: in New England, in the age before that, it had become much more common than taking snuff — since there were some who did not take snuff. It is impressive to note, as we inspect our first period, that neither advanced age, nor high office, nor mental unfitness, nor previous condition of respectability, was sufficient to protect any one from the poetic vice. . . . Perhaps, indeed, all this was their solitary condescension to human frailty. The earthly element, the passion, the carnal taint, the vanity, the weariness, or whatever else it be that, in other men, works itself off in a pleasure-journey, in a flirtation, in going to the play, or in a convivial bout did in these venerable men exhaust itself in the sly dissipation of writing verses. — MOSES C. TYLER, "History of American Literature"

Brighton, August 14, 1824

" My boat is on the shore,  
And my bark is on the sea."

I forget how the song ends, but here I am at Brighton just on the point of embarking for France. I have dragged myself out of London, as a horse drags himself out of the slough, or a fly out of a honey-pot, almost leaving a limb behind him at every tug. Not that I have been immersed in pleasure and surrounded by sweets, but rather up to the ears in ink and harassed by printers' devils.

I never have had such fagging in altering, adding, and correcting; and I have been detained beyond all patience by the delays of the press. Yesterday I absolutely broke away, without waiting for the last sheets. They are to be sent after me here by mail, to be corrected this morning, or else they must take their chance. From the time I first started pen in hand on this work, it has been nothing but hard driving with me.

I have not been able to get to Tunbridge to see the Donegals, which I really and greatly regret. Indeed I have seen nobody except a friend or two who had the kindness to hunt me out. Among these was Mr. Story, and I ate a dinner there that it took me a week to digest, having been obliged to swallow so much hard-favored nonsense from a loud-talking baronet whose name, thank God, I

forget, but who maintained Byron was not a man of courage, and therefore his poetry was not readable. I was really afraid he would bring John Story to the same way of thinking.

I went a few evenings since to see Kenney's new piece, the Alcaid. It went off lamely, and the Alcaid is rather a bore, and comes near to being generally thought so. Poor Kenney came to my room next evening, and I could not believe that one night could have ruined a man so completely. I swear to you I thought at first it was a flimsy suit of clothes had left some bedside and walked into my room without waiting for the owner to get up ; or that it was one of those frames on which clothiers stretch coats at their shop doors ; until I perceived a thin face sticking edgeways out of the collar of the coat like the axe in a bundle of fasces. He was so thin, and pale, and nervous, and exhausted — he made a dozen difficulties in getting over a spot in the carpet, and never would have accomplished it if he had not lifted himself over by the points in his shirt collar.

I saw Rogers just as I was leaving town. I had not time to ask him any particulars about you, and indeed he is not exactly the man from whom I would ask news about my friends. I dined tête-a-tête with him some time ago, and he served up his friends as he served up his fish, with a squeeze of lemon over each. It was very piquant, but it rather set my teeth on edge. . . . — Letter of Washington Irving to Thomas Moore

In the future we see the nations growing wiser and realizing that the alluring passions of their destiny are nothing but an illusion. We see the time when the world will have no use for armies. Life is evolution and evolution is development from the simple to the more complicated forms of mind and body. We see the passing show of the world drama in its present form, how it fades like the glow of evening on the distant mountains, while the world's amphitheaters resound with cheers for justice in her new and better rôle of Peace. One motion of the hand of humanity and a new history begins. Gabriel takes up his silver harp, strung with Apollo's golden hair, and to the accompanying strains, Justice with mouth unstopped, her brow unbandaged, sings a song of brotherhood which bids men pay homage at the shrine of Peace. — Closing paragraph in paper on "The Passing of War," submitted in oratorical contest

*B.* Study out each of the following passages from Stevenson's "An Apology for Idlers." Put it into literal prose, expanding it as far as is necessary to make the meaning equally clear. Then attempt to expand it further, following through the same simile, metaphor, or literary allusion and developing it into a paragraph.

It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror with your back turned on all the bustle and glamour of reality.

There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found on the summits of laborious science.

Though Falstaff was neither very sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabbases whom the world could better have done without.

Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you. He sows hurry and reaps indigestion; he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous derangement in return.

They could do easier without his services in the Circumlocution Office, than they can tolerate his fractious spirits.

You can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool.

#### THE PARAGRAPH AS A DEPENDENT UNIT

More important than any question as to the independent unit, however, is the problem of the paragraph as a unit in the longer composition. In this respect, as its history has shown, it is an artificial and literary unit. The best definition, therefore, that can be given for it, is a relative one which recognizes that it is such a literary device. To say that it should be reducible to a single topic sentence tells the truth of it as an isolated product; but to indicate in addition, as Professor Wendell has, the paragraph's intermediary position, by pointing out that *the sentence is to the paragraph as the*

*paragraph is to the whole composition*, recognizes not only the function but the actual history of the unit.

**Length and number relative to whole composition.** Any statement about the development of consecutive paragraphs involves at the outset their size and their number in the whole composition. It is evident that both of these are relative matters. It is quite impossible to mention any approximate number of words as the desirable average for paragraph length. The answer to the question, "How long shall they be?" is the answer which must be given again and again in any rhetorical catechism — "It depends." Both length and number depend primarily upon the nature of the subject matter, the form of discourse, and the length of the complete composition. They even depend upon a further physical factor, and that is the average number of words on the printed or written page; for if the paragraph indentation is an appeal to the eye, it must occur frequently enough to carry a definite significance with it. If it is necessary for the reader to recall whether the last paragraph mark was one, two, or three pages earlier in the discourse, he will be almost sure to evade the obligation and to lose the very help which this unit is devised to give. Thus there would be distinct justification for a longer average paragraph in the octavo volume of Green's "Short History of the English People," which contains about five hundred and forty words per page, than in the duodecimo edition of the Reader's Bible. The experiment of opening a volume of each of these at page 201 is illuminating. In ten pages of Green there are nine paragraphs, the last of which is two pages in length; in the corresponding ten pages of the Reader's Bible for the Book of Kings, ten paragraphs appear — in each case, about as few as could be presented without embarrassment to

the reader, but a number sufficient to provide at least one break in every pair of pages. This may fairly be described as an aspect of the physiology of the paragraph. This single instance, however, should not be stressed too greatly. The adoption of a rule of having an average of a paragraph to a page would be foolishly mechanical.

The general principle of paragraphing is this : There ought to be enough paragraphs to appeal to the eye and heighten the attention of the reader, and there ought not to be so many as to confuse and embarrass him. The two extremes may be illustrated by an old-fashioned edition of Boswell's Johnson, in which the whole voluminous work is printed in one paragraph, and the still older-fashioned sixteenth century King James version of the English Bible, in which the verses that usurp the form of the paragraph are so numerous as to lose all the value of grouping that is gained in the revised version of the closing nineteenth century. Keeping in mind, therefore, the desirability of steering between these two extremes, we may adopt the generalization, wisely made some years ago, that if a paragraph contains more than three hundred words there is danger of its being unduly long, and if it contains less than one hundred it is at least approaching a reasonable limit of brevity. This with reference to literature in general ; but to bring the problem down to the manuscript theme of five hundred to one thousand words, it would be wise to reduce both minimum and maximum somewhat below these figures. After all, even the most general use of statistics in such a matter is dangerous, for the length and number of the paragraphs must be determined by the kind of service they are supposed to perform in helping the reader to follow the progress of the writer's thought.

The legitimate definition, then, adopted above — that the sentence is to the paragraph as the paragraph is to the whole composition — is based on the idea that the paragraph is a composition in miniature, that it deals with one relatively detailed portion of a whole theme, and that the sentences it contains are similar details of the relatively general topic with which it is concerned. It may be a very unimportant officer in a big regiment, or even a "high private in the rear-rank," but it nevertheless has not only its own duties to perform but its own character and needs as well.

**The use of beginnings and endings for emphasis.** In order that its part in the whole scheme be clear, the paragraph must open and close effectively. In expanding such descriptive and narrative material as has already been discussed in this chapter (pp. 52-65), paragraph emphasis in sustained discourse gives little trouble. If there is a due relation between the whole story and the way something looked or how something happened, the point can hardly be concealed. If such details are not pertinent to the whole account, no amount of juggling can make them seem so; they ought to be cut out. But in exposition and argument the relation between one idea and another is not so evident, for it is not revealed by the simple order of time and of space, and it must be made clear in the most conspicuous parts of the paragraphs. In practice, different writers have their characteristic ways of building paragraphs, ways which are derived not so much from consciously adopted theory as from habits of mind unconsciously adjusted to the needs of their readers. The more nearly the writer assumes the attitude of teacher toward his readers, the more likely he is to employ unequivocal topic sentences and to put them in conspicuous positions.

*Paragraph emphasis in the didactic essay.* Dean Swift, when he was telling the British people how to reform their ways, provided almost all of his short paragraphs with entering wedges which he could pound into and through the toughest of prejudices. Macaulay's<sup>1</sup> essays are full of such sentences, just as Macaulay himself was full of confidence in his often vulnerable conclusions. Dr. Johnson, no less positive, was hardly less definite in his practice of laying down the law to his reader near the beginning of each paragraph. All of these men were great talkers, tremendously positive, and accustomed to telling their fellows what to think ; and when they took to writing they all became what we nowadays call journalists — one of them addressing the British public by way of widely circulated political pamphlets ; another through his own little periodicals, the *Rambler* and the *Idler* ; and the third through the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*.

*I think it is agreed* by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is, in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance ; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

*But my intention* is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars ; it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them as those who demand our charity in the streets.

*As to my own part*, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. . . . — "A Modest Proposal for

<sup>1</sup> For illustrations from Macaulay see pp. 59 and 132.

Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country, and for Making them Beneficial to the Public," Jonathan Swift.

Of his miscellaneous poetry *I cannot say anything very favorable*. The powers of Congreve seem to desert him when he leaves the stage, as Antæus was no longer strong than when he could touch the ground. It cannot be observed without wonder, that a mind so vigorous and fertile in dramatic compositions should on any other occasion discover nothing but impotence and poverty. He has in these little pieces neither elevation of fancy, selection of language, nor skill in versification; yet, *if I were required to select* from the whole mass of English poetry the most poetical paragraph, *I know not what I could prefer* to an exclamation in "The Mourning Bride." [Quotation follows]—SAMUEL JOHNSON, "Life of William Congreve"

Yet the teacher need not be the browbeater. Joseph Addison, affable and unimpassioned, owed at least part of his success in bringing philosophy "to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea tables and in coffeehouses" to the clear simplicity of his paragraph writing. So, also, did Oliver Goldsmith owe his popularity in part to the same cause; and although the gentle Charles Lamb did not work under the same impelling motive to instruct and inform, he relied on the same simple clarity of structure to bring his points home to the reader.<sup>1</sup> If a writer is eager to be understood and ready to assume the burden of catching and holding the attention of the reader, he will not throw on the other fellow the responsibility of figuring out what the paragraph is about; he will take it himself. This is the attitude of the journalist. He is writing that those who run may read; he wants to retard the running and

<sup>1</sup> See Addison, *Spectator*, first and second papers; Goldsmith, "The Citizen of the World," Letter XXIX, Description of a Club of Authors; and Lamb, "The Essays of Elia," Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist.

provoke reading ; and naturally he posts directions, as it were, at the street corners of his discourse.

*Emphasis in the editorial paragraph.* Such an aggressive use of opening and closing passages is notable in the paragraphs of very many editorial articles in the best daily newspapers. They are written upon topics of the day by skilled men whose business it is to influence public opinion. In the heart of the vast wilderness of news, the reader can resort for a moment to a part of one page which is filled not with facts but with ideas. The point of these columns is not so much what millionaire Smith or bankbreaker Yegman did yesterday, as what the averagely intelligent citizen ought to be thinking to-morrow. The editorial writer has a slim chance at even arresting the attention of the business man who is dividing it between the paper and his eggs and coffee. Besides condensing his message to lowest terms, he must make his thought clear at a glance. As a result of these conditions, a surprising proportion of editorial paragraphs are so written (as the present one is) that the gist of them is contained in a more or less rough combination of the opening and the closing words. Whether the writers are conscious of this formula as they use it is of no consequence here. They may employ it with the same habitual skill with which they perform many other intricate and difficult feats, such as putting on their neckties, or riding bicycles. The result in any case is that they produce in each article a succession of short paragraphs which may be understood even when they are merely skimmed, and which are enforced and enriched by the subordinate material contained in the mid-portions. This is not to be upheld as anything more than one ingenious way of doing a difficult job under such trying conditions as the daily journalist must

recognize. In the special articles in the best popular monthly magazines these conditions are somewhat modified, but in the main they are not fundamentally different, and for this reason productions of the journalistic type are admirable models for the student theme writer.

#### EXERCISE

Note the paragraphs in the selections and write others similarly constructed, first singly and then in series.

#### PLAIN SPEAKING

*It is now universally recognized that consumption is a curable disease* — curable when caught in time. What is needed to conquer the disease is *fresh air, wholesome food, proper care, and cheerful surroundings*.

*In spite of these established and widely heralded facts the first impulse of the person afflicted with the white plague is to run in search of the arid regions of the west.* He deserts his home and the comforts which the home or a sanitarium near home could provide and goes to Colorado or southern California. The climate does not compensate him for the detrimental effects which loneliness has upon his constitution. The atmospheric benefits are offset a thousand fold by the wants and inconveniences to which the patient exposes himself in a strange country. *A ticket to Colorado or California in the hands of a tuberculosis victim of limited finances is frequently a pass to the Beyond.*

*The public health service in Washington is now doing some plain speaking* on this subject. It urges upon consumptives to stay at home and get all the fresh air and good food and cheerful company they can instead of going west to get beautiful climate, but poor food, home-sickness, and isolation. It is a sensible and timely warning and ought to go a long ways to impress upon tuberculosis sufferers the simple fact that climate alone will not cure the disease and that *the best place for a sick person of poor and even average means is home or a sanitarium near home.* — *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1913

## NEW SLANG FOR OLD EVER THE ORDER

*However much slang we may use ourselves, we all dislike and despise slang that is not our own.* Old men, who have tender memories of the slang of their own youth, see nothing but pertness and vulgarity in the slang of their grandsons, and for all of us there comes a time when we no longer feel contemporary with the slang of the present, when we have no part in making or using it, and have to ask what it means when we first hear it used. Then the new slang words seem to us presumptuous upstarts, expressive of the general brainless presumption of youth, and indeed they are *expressive of that free masonry of youth which we no longer share.*

*Slang, in its first meaning, seems to have been the language of thieves,* and it still keeps something of this first meaning in that it is the language of youth keeping its own secrets from middle age, and a token by which the young recognize all who are of their fellowship. That is the reason why it is always changing, for youth must always make its own slang afresh. The slang of five years ago is middle aged and has associations that are already hostile. No self-respecting youth can use the slang of his uncle; indeed, he pities his uncle for finding any savour or fun in words so old-fashioned. He cannot guess that his uncle, when he uses the word "*toff*," remembers the time when he himself was one, just as he will some day remember the time when he was a "*nut*."

*Elderly men have always protested against the vulgarity of new slang* and professed to fear that the English language would be utterly corrupted by it. But the language outlives the slang, for the slang passes with the youth that made it, or only stays when it expresses a newly discovered thing rather than a mood that is always coming and always going. The word "*prig*" was once slang, but it is ceasing to be that because it marks the discovery of something permanent but not before recognized, whereas "*masher*" gave way to "*toff*" and "*toff*" to "*nut*," because the toff felt old-fashioned when he was called a masher and the nut when he was called a toff. Each has thought himself a novelty, but he has been novel only in his fashions, whether of clothes or words. He himself is merely generic youth, feeling new, but as old as the spring or the exultant crow of the cockerel. He is discovering the ancient world afresh

and finding his own absurd words for his own absurd discoveries. No doubt we would rather that he should use the *language of Shakespeare and Milton*; at least we say so.

*We do not want new words for old discoveries that we made long ago for ourselves*; we do not want youth to be incessantly insisting upon the fact that it is young and implying that we are not. For that is what we really resent in new slang. It will very soon date itself, but meanwhile it is dating us. We have passed out of the fellowship of youth, and the new slang tells us so, because it is silly and strange to us. It expresses a general state of high spirits which we no longer share, and which, we should like to explain, is not worth sharing. The old slang has lost its high spirits with those who used it. It has become either obsolete or decorous; but this new slang is the wild oats of language being sown all over again, and for us the time of wild oats is past.

*Youth, no doubt, must be silly, but we do not see why it should get so much enjoyment out of its silliness*, and it is the sense of enjoyment in slang that makes us dislike it. It is well enough that youth should be inarticulate, but not that it should make a preposterous language out of its own inarticulateness, that it should ever charge meaningless or misused words with a meaning that we do not catch. For that is the offense of slang — that it gives particular words too much to do, that it burdens them with associations which cannot be expressed in any paraphrase. So if you ask a youth the precise amount of any slang term that he is constantly using he cannot tell you. He can only repeat the term itself, hoping thereby to convey its associations with it. It has a magic for him such as words like "glamour" or "gloaming" have for bad poets. It makes him feel a man of the world, just as their overexpressive words make them feel poetical; and we are cross that he should be able so easily to *persuade himself that he is a man of the world when he is nothing of the kind*.

*Slang, in fact, is both raw and sophisticated*, and this incongruity is the secret of its ugliness. But most of us have been raw ourselves, and most of us have talked slang that is now as dead as our own callow youth. The new slang will die, too, in good time, and the *language of Shakespeare and Milton will remain for the wisdom of experience*. — *London Times*, December 31, 1913

*Paragraph emphasis in the literary essay.* In order not to present too one-sided a view of the whole matter, it should be explicitly stated that in forms of literature not so definitely prepared for the casual reader the definiteness of external structure and outline is not so prime a necessity. Indeed, in the treatment of some kinds of topics a certainty of handling which seemed at all aggressive would be quite ill-advised. The attitude of the teacher is rightly, to a certain degree, that of an expert who is offering information for the acceptance of others of less maturity and expertness ; but in a discussion between intellectual equals, it is often desirable to speak as if presenting material to be considered and weighed. Macaulay could succeed with his positive tactics when addressing or commenting on "the common observer," but when he began to lord it over his fellow writers he drew down upon himself the kind of disapproval that made one of them say that he would be grateful if he could be "as cocksure of anything as Macaulay was of everything." So in the treatment of subjects which are not so much matters of fact as of opinion, it is etiquette to refrain from all appearance of self-complacency, even, among other respects, in the minor matter of paragraph emphasis.

Thus it is very likely to arouse the reader's ire to use the first personal pronoun even when writing in a personal vein. There is little to be gained and sometimes much to be lost by resorting to such expressions as, "I use this phrase because \_\_\_\_\_"; "So it seems to me clear that \_\_\_\_\_"; "It is now my purpose to \_\_\_\_\_"; "I have now demonstrated that \_\_\_\_\_"; and others of the same brand. Very often it is necessary to gain just the effect which such simple and unvarnished connectives would secure, but in the majority of cases it is better rhetorical manners to keep the personal pronoun out. The

garment of one's thought can be made to fit without having the basting threads visible.

**The use of beginnings and endings for theme coherence.** The beginnings and endings of paragraphs are trebly important. If they are well devised, within the paragraph they are likely to make for unity and certain to contribute to emphasis. And between successive paragraphs coherence can be obtained if an evident relation is established by the opening words and made easy by the closing phrase, clause, or sentence. The first requisite for coherence between paragraphs is, of course, that they be actually related in content ; but even when a composition is logically constructed, it may be expressed in such a cold or colorless fashion that the reader needs to resort to a second or even a third glance before he catches the sequence of thought. What the reader ought to do, however, in order to catch the sequence of thought, is by no means what he always will do. The ideal reader will not let a page go before he is quite sure of its aim ; but the average reader — who is by no means ideal — is apt to slip along with only a half notion as to the exact bearing of one idea on another. The burden is on the writer. If he proposes to have the reader actively attentive, he must make him attend ; and among many ways one of the best is in the deft manipulation of paragraph endings as they serve for couplers in the train of thought.

The following selection illustrates direct connection and transition :

If one chose to swell the catalogue, *other structures* in considerable numbers *could be discussed* as representing successive steps in London history all down the line. From the preceding chapters could easily be culled a long list of surviving buildings which would be no more than a nucleus for the complete inventory that would satisfy an antiquarian. Yet the associations which cluster round an

edifice cannot begin to rival those which belong to a thoroughfare. Bishopsgate Street and Cheapside are just as much on the map now as they ever were. Friday, and Wood, and Bread, and Milk streets punctuate the City exactly as they did when Milton trod them. A church loses some of its original charm every time it is restored. To keep it from tumbling to pieces we have in a way to cheapen it. But the thing that makes a street a street cannot tumble to pieces. We are utterly careless as to whether the cobblestones are new or old; for *a street is not a condition, it is a fact.*

*This fact*, if the traveler can feel it as well as know it, may quite thrill him as he goes about in the old neighborhoods. A memory of the map of Shakespeare's London with the main thoroughfares and their relative positions is enough to insure any wayfarer against being even temporarily lost in the heart of London. He can find his way above ground with only the kind of difficulty that gives a zest to his little journeys; and if he descend underground into the "Tube" he can know that he is still zigzagging round to connect with the intersections of roads that were immemorially old before rapid transit was ever dreamed of. There is only one straight line of any length in the whole anatomical-looking diagram of these blue and red low-ways, and that follows the course of *Oxford and Kensington High streets and of Holborn.*

*What is true of the streets is no less true of the public squares,*  
.... — "London in English Literature"

#### EXERCISE

The following are paragraph outlines of student themes averaging fifteen hundred words in length. Each is made up of words literally quoted from the beginnings and ends of paragraphs. Words in brackets in a few cases indicate intermediate passages. Note the number of paragraphs and hence the average length; the degree to which unity and emphasis are assured in each; the indicated relationships between successive paragraphs, contributing to coherence of the whole. Make similar outlines of your own themes and of printed passages.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FACTORY IN ENGLAND

The factory system which was established in England in the late eighteenth century had long been undergoing a slow development. . . . it is necessary to review the slow evolution of English industry.

In the handicraft stage there first appeared some of the principles that later governed the factory system. . . . Each craft had its guild which specified in detail how the trade should be learned, how many workers should be admitted, and how the business should be carried on.

The guilds as they grew more exclusive and grasping became more and more powerful in commerce and politics . . . [until finally] . . . the handicraft system, being limited to a select few, began to decay as the domestic system replaced it.

The domestic system developed first in the towns and then on the farms. . . . This system was attended by inconvenience in getting the goods to the consumer, and its decline began with the widening of the market.

The extent of the market had been limited by the poor means of communication . . . more than a thousand additional miles of turnpike.

The improved means of communication caused an extraordinary increase in commerce . . . [and a consequent] . . . rapid growth of population in the towns. . . . This shift of population was given an impetus by the industrial development which came with the introduction of machinery in place of hand tools.

The invention of steam-driven labor-saving devices . . . made it impossible for men to carry on the work under their own roofs, and the factory succeeded the home as the unit of production.

The factory system had now become established. . . . was still a novelty, identified almost exclusively with the textile industries, and its connection with almost every other department of producing labor was still to be developed in the next generation.

## THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD'S RUBBER SUPPLY

Rubber, although known in the eighteenth century, is the basis for a comparatively new industry. . . . In 1910 the average price of rubber in the London market was \$1.86 a pound and the best grades were sold at \$3.00 and higher.

Nearly all of the world's supply of rubber had at one time come from the Amazon River valley. . . . Thus the district which first supplied the industry, and which seemed to have limitless resources, is now sliding back.

The reasons for this "going back" may easily be seen. . . . [Jungle almost impenetrable. Methods wasteful. Brazilian government trying to encourage investors.] . . . Few, however, have taken advantage of this offer on account of the doubtfulness of getting returns on any money they might invest.

The next native rubber forests of any importance are those of the Congo River district. . . . the result will be the same as in Brazil.

Asia and Central America also offer some native rubber forests. . . . [Central America] . . . offers a beautiful example of the robbing of a country of its natural resources by reason of a lust for quick returns.

By 1905, therefore, the securing of rubber from tropical forest trees failed to provide a sufficient supply. . . . The methods hit upon were, first, the establishing of rubber plantations . . . and, second, the making of artificial rubber.

Among the many rubber plants that are at present raised on plantations, the guayule of southern Mexico and southwestern United States stands out. . . . the guayule "offers great possibilities as a crop with steady returns once every eight or ten years."

Facing the rubber shortage with characteristic energy are the great powers of the world. . . . New trees are being planted each year. . . . In 1911 alone it is estimated that half a million acres were planted in East India.

To supplement the production of plantation rubber, chemists have been at work trying to solve the making of rubber by artificial means. . . . If laboratory rubber could be made as cheaply as its champions assert, it would rapidly drive the present rubber producers from the market.

The increase in the demand for rubber is therefore being met in various ways. . . . the future supply will become more and more generous until the demand is adequately met.

## ON THE STUDY OF THE MIGRATION OF BIRDS

Soon after the snows have passed, the return of the robin indicates that spring is near. . . . The migration of birds is a distinctive phase of bird life. . . . With some of the facts known of it and the methods by which it can be studied this paper has to deal.

There are two migrations during the year: one in the Spring, and one in the Fall. In the Spring . . . [first] . . . summer residents . . . [then] . . . transients . . . In the Fall conditions are nearly reversed.

The extent of a bird's migration seems to depend in great measure on the kind of food it eats. . . . show that the place of a bird's origin also has a bearing on the extent of its migration.

The routes which birds follow . . . have been determined for but very few birds. . . . Here is some work for the student.

Many of the species that take long migratory journeys do so in large flocks. . . . For this method of flight the following theories have been advanced. . . . Observation work would give results of much value to the students.

Several theories have been offered for the manner in which birds find their way while migrating. . . . Nevertheless none of the theories so far advanced are fully satisfactory.

The reasons *why* birds migrate are even harder to find out since the causes may go back many ages. . . . no satisfactory explanation has yet been given that will explain either how or why birds migrate.

It is evident that more data are necessary if these problems are to be solved. . . . The aim in all cases would be to obtain the most complete data possible.

While the student is engaged in this work, it is well to bear in mind certain questions. [Seven questions follow.]

Although considerable information has been selected, it is inadequate. . . . if the student is willing to do this, an interesting and instructive field but little touched is opened up before him.

## NAPOLEON BONAPARTE: HIS CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE

Almost every one is familiar with Napoleon's appearance as recorded in his many portraits,—his short stature, his . . . Add to this a certain rudeness of manner, and an exalted and dignified bearing, and you have a fair picture of Napoleon at the time of his greatest power.

His imagination was highly developed. . . . Yet his imagination was not of the fantastic type, for what he planned he executed with remarkable precision.

Apparently nothing was impossible to him. . . . His whole life was a triumphant display of his indomitable will.

Napoleon's chosen path to power was the army, and he early proved his military genius. . . . [The capture of Toulon. Later the battle of Austerlitz.] . . . He had again proven his mastery of military tactics.

Other characteristics were mighty assets in time of battle. . . . [Master of details. . . . Resourceful. . . . Magnetic] . . . So much for the virtues of Napoleon.

On the other hand he was irreligious in nature. . . . To Napoleon religion and morals were vague generalities without secure foundation.

He was extremely egotistical. . . . Undoubtedly he ranks as one of the most selfish men that ever lived.

Such were the appearance and character of Napoleon.

A good illustration of how not to do it is furnished in the machine-made theme which superimposes a careful outline onto the body of a theme and labels paragraphs *firstly*, *secondly*, *thirdly*, *lastly*, and *to sum up*. As in the case of paragraph emphasis already discussed, this sort of treatment is needlessly harsh and brutal. Instances of how the effect of orderliness can be secured without such naked precision are supplied in the pages of any skillful writer. In Arnold Bennett's "The Human Machine," for example, each of the

brief chapters is about the length of an ordinary student theme. The subject of Chapter XIV is "A Man and his Environment." He points out at the start that he has been dealing "with the human machine as a contrivance for adapting the man to his environment." He now states that the well-trained man can best judge whether his environment is a good one. "If, for instance, he lives in London" introduces a discussion of locality. The next paragraph begins "As with the environment of place, so with the environment of individuals," making a clear transition. Then comes "Thirdly, there is the environment of one's general purpose in life." The conclusion follows. There is nothing subtle in this, but it is clear without being mechanical. The reader is led rather than driven. Each of these three openings is of a different kind, and it happens that they illustrate simply and well three of the best kinds to be found. The first begins with a specific detail which illustrates the general content of the paragraph. The second alludes to what has gone before and indicates specifically what is to come. The last uses a definite connective word, *thirdly*, followed by a topic sentence. Such methods are worth noting in point of both clearness and informal variety.

#### SUMMARY

The paragraph, which has developed from a device for punctuation into a working unit of composition, may be composed with relative freedom from restraints of usage, provided only that it be reducible to a single unified topic. It is of equal value in expanding concrete fact or abstract truth. As a dependent unit, its length is determined largely by the nature of the composition in which it falls. And so, too, the methods

for securing emphasis depend upon the kind of discourse and the type of reader for which it is devised. If there be a real connection between the paragraphs, emphasis between them is apt to induce coherence between them and Clearness in the whole composition. Interest originates in simple, lively, and picturesque detail and in the appeal to the reader's imagination through the use of contrast, comparison, and a moderate employment of figurative language.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SENTENCE — CLEARNESS

*The importance of usage.* Usage in the whole composition. Usage in the paragraph. Usage in the sentence. Revision a factor in sentence writing.

*Classification of sentences.* The simple sentence. The partially compound sentence. The compound sentence. The complex compound sentence. The complex sentence.

*Clearness in the sentence.* Sentence unity. Sentence coherence. Punctuation.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF USAGE

As soon as the discussion of composition shifts to the sentence, a factor already mentioned becomes of the greatest importance. This is the matter of usage.

**Usage in the whole composition.** In considering the composition as a whole, or the paragraph (the next smaller element), this determining factor may be almost entirely neglected. The best method of writing a complete statement may be described in general terms, but the terms are very general and the application of them depends almost entirely on the skill of the writer. It is conceivably possible to violate almost all the abstract precepts laid down with reference to the composition and still write a very effective one. A bold imagination and a firm hand can do "things unattempted yet in prose or rime" and still achieve the desired effect. In fact, the history of the chief types of literature is a history of continual modification of what had seemed like permanently adopted and universally recognized laws. Finally, we

have come to the conclusion that the ultimate test of the rightness of a work of literature is its effect on the reader, and that if it produces the desired effect and does not conform with what has been law, it becomes a new law unto itself and for its successors. Shakespeare's violations of the dramatic unities and the modern dramatists' abandonment of the exposition, rise, climax, resolution, and catastrophe of the play are only two among many illustrations of the degree to which usage does not dominate the composition.

**Usage in the paragraph.** So, too, in the case of the paragraph ; as has been already mentioned, this element of composition is comparatively recent in invention and very flexible in its form. The only really embarrassing question that may be asked is, Does it do its work ? and if it does, it justifies itself. The fact that certain general principles of structure usually produce good results is interesting and worth heeding, yet both composition and paragraph must be discussed in relative terms. What is preferable and what is undesirable may be pointed out, but seldom may the words *correct* or *incorrect* be used.

**Usage in the sentence.** As soon, however, as one turns to the sentence, one may employ the adjectives *right* and *wrong*; and when the question is put, "Why is this right?" or "Why is that wrong?" the answer is invariably, "Usage has determined it so." The reason for this is a simple one — as the sentence is the fundamental unit of style, the laws of the sentence have been determined by the habits of a nation's speech. A man may go through life happily oblivious of the principles of general composition and completely ignorant of the fact that there is such a thing as a paragraph. As a matter of practice, except for the limited number of professional men who need to be conscious of this unit (as writers,

lawyers, preachers, and teachers), probably the overwhelming majority of educated people never give the composition of the paragraph a thought and are never estimated by their ability to compose one. But if the most unschooled member of society habitually slips up on his sentence structure, he is branded by this defect. To be able to comply with the simplest matters of usage in composing sentences is something for which, on self-defensive grounds, every educated person strives. It is no credit to him if he can do it, but to be unable to meet the demands of correctness in ordinary oral discourse betrays a certain sort of unrespectability.

Sentence usage, moreover, prevails independently in each language. Whatever is broadly true of general principles of composition and of paragraph writing is broadly applicable to these units in every language; but usage in the sentence is one matter in English and quite another in any other tongue. Furthermore, the dominance of usage is apparently more rigorous in the English sentence than it used to be in the classical languages and somewhat greater than in the more highly inflected modern languages. Quite apart from the vital laws of grammar, the order of English speech so determines what the majority of sentences mean that a violation of order may completely transform sentence meaning either into the opposite of what is intended or into nonsense. It thus becomes necessary, in English discourse, not only to consider definite rules and to give attention to desirable effects but also to take thought of many practices which should be avoided.

**Revision a factor in sentence writing.** As a final distinction, practice in sentence structure must be done almost wholly in writing. Whole compositions and paragraphs may

be well considered, formulated in advance, and orally delivered in acceptable fashion. It is because of this fact that in composition courses the broad constructive work is usually first undertaken. If, however, such a composition is transcribed by a stenographer or written out at first hand in what is often called a "rough draft," there are few writers who will not profit from a revision of the sentences and the choice of words. Sentences must first be forged by bold strokes, and this may be done either orally or in rapid writing ; but the best sentences must then be turned, polished, and delicately adjusted until they exactly fit their contexts. The attempt — as if such a process were possible — to do the revising in advance results in disastrous stiffness of form. Beecher is quoted as saying that when the English language got in his way it did n't stand a chance. Of Beecher the orator such a paradox may have been wisely true ; but of any man who is putting his ideas on paper, it is equally true that he himself stands little chance unless he shows a profound respect for the English language in the revision of his work. Revision, moreover, intelligently performed, counts in two directions. An awkward habit, corrected off the page a dozen, twenty, or fifty times, finally recognizes that the cause is lost and surrenders from sheer exhaustion. Any farmer will testify that an old field which has been well tilled for years has far fewer weeds than freshly converted meadow land. The practice of careful self-criticism roots out all sorts of miscellaneous bad habits and makes room for the cultivation of good ones.

## CLASSIFICATION OF SENTENCES

Every sentence is capable of being classified in five respects. The sentence just printed, for instance, is simple (not compound or complex), declarative (not imperative or interrogative), medium in length (not short or long), loose (not periodic), and not characterized by balanced structure. This is perhaps a typical sentence—the sort more often encountered than any other, although the combinations of the five characteristics are numerous and varied. Of these five methods of classification, the first, which involves syntax has most to do with matters of Clearness and may be discussed largely in terms of internal unity and coherence. The last four have more to do with Interest, with the question of emphasis in the sentence and coherence between sentences, and with the thought of the sentence as a dependent unit. Each of these two divisions is important enough to merit discussion in a chapter by itself.

**The simple sentence.** The simple sentence is a sentence, like this one, with a single subject and a single predicate. It is hard to violate unity within its comparatively brief limits, and the difficulties in emphasis and coherence are slight compared to those in the other two types.

***The misuse of the period.*** The most elementary error with regard to the simple sentence has to do with the misuse or the omission of the period. The former of these errors results in labeling as a sentence a group of words which lacks a subject, an independent finite verb, or both.

Another trouble is our eighteenth-century treatment of our standing army. Having men enlist for three years and then offering them inducements to remain.

A comma might be used in place of the period, so that the latter half of the complete sentence thus formed would be in apposition to *treatment*; or by making *Having . . . remain* the subject of a new finite verb, a second sentence could be completed.

Having men enlist for three years and then offering them inducements to remain, is a certain method of producing restless disorganization.

*The omission of the period.* The omission of the period where it should be used, most often through the substitution of the comma, is more common than its misuse and occurs frequently even in the work of experienced writers. The reason for this seems sometimes to be a defective sense of rhythm; more often it is vagueness of thinking.

It is all unnecessary, enlarge the vocabulary.

He turned and left, there was nothing else to do.

His utterance may be well enough as a school exercise, it is not conversation.

Even among experienced writers, a failure to feel the pause will occasionally result in such a passage as the first of these examples, which is made up of two simple emphatic sentences. Other remedies sometimes present themselves, however—as in the second example, in which a semicolon would serve; or in the third, which needs a conjunction, *but*, to introduce the second clause.

What is known technically as the simple sentence may be both long and complicated. The subject and predicate may be modified at length.

Embarrassed by the novelty of his surroundings and the thought of the curious gaze of many strangers, he came to grief at the very

entrance of the ballroom, catching his foot in a trailing portière, lunging awkwardly over a filmy train of lace and silk, and coming to a desperate conclusion on hands and knees in the midst of the slippery floor.

Or the subject, instead of being a noun, may be a phrase or clause :

To act in haste and repent at leisure is costly in the long run.

What he flattered in his own mind as his knowledge of the world was founded on his amazing inexperience. (See also the revision of the example at top of page 92.)

Yet, as a rule, simple sentences are apt to be relatively brief and, on account of their simplicity and brevity, to be unified, coherent, and emphatic.

**The partially compound sentence.** A type which bridges the line between the simple and the compound, and which is usually easy to handle, is the partially compound sentence, one member of which is compound. This may be the subject, as in "Time and tide wait for no man," or the predicate, as in "It cracked and growled and roared and howled, like noises in a swound." As this sort is seldom productive of trouble, peculiar to itself, it needs only to be mentioned and dismissed.

**The compound sentence.** The compound sentence contains at least two independent propositions, or sentences. It is in effect compounded of two or more members, loosely linked by coördinating conjunctions and thus joined not only because they are of equal importance but because in their context no one of them merits the dignity of standing in a sentence by itself. Even where the values of the different members are equal, there are different sorts or shades of equality.

*Supplementary detail.* This is expressed by the commonest connective, *and*, and its various equivalents: *and not, nor, also, moreover, furthermore.*

He had on a tight-fitting, parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells.

I do not mean irreverent—far from it; nor do I mean incapable of hero-worship.

*Contrast.* This is most often expressed by *but*, as well as by *yet, nor, while, whereas, still, however, nevertheless.*

The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

*An alternative.* This is expressed by *or, or else, otherwise.*

We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.

*Consequence.* This explains that one thing is true and as a consequence another thing of equal importance is true. It is expressed by *therefore, hence, consequently*, and other equivalents.

Thy wealth being forfeit to the state, thou hast not left the value of a cord; therefore thou must be hanged at the state's charge.

*Explanation.* This is the reverse of the type just given and is introduced by *for.*

Thou must be hanged at the expense of the state, for, thy wealth being forfeit to the state, thou hast not left the value of a cord.

*Without expressed conjunction.* Compound sentences having any of these various shades of coördination are frequently written without any expressed conjunction.

It is useless to take opinions on trust, to retail them, to adopt them ; they must be formed, created, felt. (*For* omitted.)

Measured as income, the public wealth will be large ; measured as capital, it will be small. (*But* omitted.)

I pierce its order ; I dissipate its fear ; I dispose of it within the circuit of my expanding life. (*And* omitted.)

The chief defect to guard against in the composition of compound sentences is the miscellaneous use of *and* in place of other conjunctives and the employment of *but* in place of other adversatives (*yet, still, however*) with slightly different shades of meaning. More important even than this, is the avoidance of technically correct compound sentences, which are loose and careless substitutes for complex — the most difficult and intricate to handle.

It was "blowing guns," and he double-reefed.

The signal was given, and they left.

These sentences are apparently compound, but are really complex in the relation between the two ideas in each. More attention is therefore given them in the discussion of the complex sentence in connection with the third principle of coherence (see pp. 113-120).

**The complex compound sentence.** The complex compound sentence, another intermediary type like the partially compound, is made up of coördinate parts, one or more of which contain dependent clauses.

The professional politician is not the man who has studied statesmanship, but he is the man who is practiced in winning elections.

Times of heroism are generally times of terror, but the day never shines in which this element may not work.

Whatever is peculiar to these as distinguished from other compound forms will be mentioned in the following discussion of the complex sentence.

**The complex sentence.** The complex sentence has one or more independent clauses, each with its own subject and predicate, and one or more dependent clauses. By a dependent clause is meant a statement with its own subject and predicate, which is made relative to some other statement, and which does not satisfy the mind of the hearer or reader if it is stated alone. The preceding sentence will provide an illustration. The words "if it is stated alone" rouse only a doubt and a query in the mind of the hearer. "When he was going down the street," "although it was a rainy day," "if he made the slightest disturbance," "since the contest was so close," "when this element may not work," —all of these expressions, in themselves, create a dissatisfaction when left uncompleted. Each, as a dependent clause, needs the independent clause upon which it hangs. It is easy to fill out each one in a dozen or twenty ways; and when so completed, it will be seen that each concluding part could stand by itself, being merely modified in some measure by the dependent or subordinate clause. The varieties of complex sentence are very great, although the chief classes are only three in number. These are the complex sentences in which there are subordinate noun clauses giving the substance of direct or indirect quotations or questions; those with subordinate adjective clauses introduced by relative pronouns; and those with subordinate adverbial clauses introduced by conjunctions.

*Subordinate noun clauses.* The subordinate noun clauses present almost no difficulties peculiar to themselves. The following are representative:

She asked, "What time does the train leave?"  
He replied that he did not remember.  
We tried to find out how far he had gone.

The one special demand upon such sentences is in the case of sustained indirect questions or quotations. In these the verbs should be in secondary tenses and should be consistent with each other. Although errors in this respect are matters rather of syntax than of rhetoric, they may be classified also as violations of the second principle of coherence (see pp. 108-113).

*Subordinate adjective clauses.* The relative pronoun is the introducing word in a vast number of dependent clauses.

I know a man who is a member of Congress.

We passed a house which was painted bright red from cellar to ridgepole.

You must turn to the left just beyond the windmill that stands on the top of the hill.

The violations of relative-pronoun usage are chiefly those in which the pronoun is too far separated from the word to which it refers (see Coherence I, p. 103) and those in which the pronoun is not given any proper antecedent noun (see Coherence III, p. 113).

*Subordinate adverbial clauses.* Subordinate clauses introduced by conjunctions are more numerous and far more varied than pronominal clauses. This variety is caused by the variety of subordinate ideas and by the number of conjunctions which may be used to indicate each one of these relationships. Subordinating conjunctions set down at random would make a very long and very confusing list. They may, however, be classified in terms of the kind of work they do. The chief types are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In every case where usage permits, in order to make the example clearer, the principal clause is stated first and the subordinate clause after.

1. *Time.*

He went South when the winter came on.

They took their leave after a few moments of formal conversation.

The soldiers regained confidence as soon as Washington appeared.

The audience was perfectly silent while the great artist was singing.

The number of temporal conjunctions is very great, indicating a large number of shades of past, present, and future time relationships.

2. *Place.*

The book is lying where I left it.

" Everywhere that Mary went

The lamb was sure to go."

3. *Cause.*

We would better drop the discussion since we cannot agree.

The enemy retreated in good order as there was no chance of winning a victory.

The roof caved in because the snowfall was so heavy.

Some confusion is likely to result here through the fact that both *as* and *since* are also used as temporal conjunctions ("as I was going down the street," "since he arrived").

4. *Result.* In this form of sentence usage requires that the principal clause come first.

He was so clumsy that he tipped over the canoe.

There was such a violent storm that the corn crop was ruined.

5. *Purpose.*

The old gentleman went on ahead to check the trunks.

He pretended to go off to the left in order to throw them on the wrong track.

6. *Condition.*

I will erect a building worth \$100,000 if you will spend \$10,000 a year toward its equipment and maintenance.

He agreed to carry on the work provided he was given a free hand.

7. *Concession.* This type of clause grants something in opposition to what is expressed in the independent clause.

He undertook to lead the expedition although he was in no way qualified for the task.

Notwithstanding the pain which he suffered and the danger which he incurred, he continued stubbornly on his self-imposed task.

8. *Manner.* This type of subordinate clause indicates how the action of the principal clause was performed.

He left the office as if he did n't have a care in the world.

The students cheered the struggling athletes as though the welfare of the nation depended on the amount of noise they made.

9. *Degree of comparison.* This type of sentence can show equality or inequality of degree, or a variation of two sets of differences in the same proportion.

Napoleon was as crafty as he was imperious.

The Sedleys were more anxious to have their superiors tolerate them than to have their inferiors respect them.

The higher the flames rose and the louder the kettle sang, the happier was the group gathered in the firelight.

#### CLEARNESS IN THE SENTENCE

Thus far the attempt has been made to indicate the degree to which the sentence is subject to usage and to classify the chief types of structure. Now, in the interest of Clearness, it is time to discuss the principles of composition as applied to the sentence.

**Sentence unity.** The principle of unity demands that the sentence deal with a single idea, that it contain nothing but what the writer wants it to contain, and thus that all extraneous matter be excluded. There is very little that can be said by way of rule and precept in behalf of unity. To violate it within the limits of a sentence requires either so distinctly

erratic a mental process or so considerable a degree of ingenuity that the result of violated sentence unity is almost always incongruous and amusing. Writers of fiction show their appreciation of the fact in delineating comic characters by means of this rhetorical failing. These characters are made to talk long and rambling sentences, in which the connection between each idea and its successor leads them to meander through a discursive succession of random observations.

Such was Dickens's character Flora Finching, in "Little Dorrit," whom he described as "running on with astonishing speed, and pointing her conversation with nothing but commas, and very few of them."

"Oh good gracious me I hope you never kept yourself a bachelor so long on my account!" tittered Flora; "but of course you never did why should you, pray don't answer, I don't know where I'm running to, oh do tell me something about the Chinese ladies whether their eyes are really so long and narrow always putting me in mind of mother-of-pearl fish at cards and do they really wear tails down their back and plaited too or is it only the men, and when they pull their hair so very tight off their foreheads don't they hurt themselves, and why do they stick little bells all over their bridges and temples and hats and things or don't they really do it!"— "Little Dorrit," chap. xiii.

Jane Austen has shown by her Miss Bates, a character in "Emma," that such erratic lack of unity is not a mere trick of omitted punctuation. Says Miss Bates,

They had not intended to go over till the summer, but she is so impatient to see them again; for till she married last October she was never away from them so much as a week, which must make it very strange to be in different kingdoms, I was going to say, but however different countries, and so she wrote a very urgent letter to her mother, or her father,— I declare I do not know which it was, but we shall see presently in Jane's letter,—

wrote in Mr. Dixon's name as well as her own, to press their coming over directly; and they would give them the meeting in Dublin, and take them back to their country-seat, Baly-craig,—a beautiful place I fancy.—"Emma," chap. xix.

In a good many brief sentences which seem to be lacking in unity, the apparent defect is brought about through the lack of some missing clause which would secure unity. In other words, there are many sentences apparently lacking in unity which are really lacking in coherence.

I decided to get an education and immediately left Massachusetts.

In this sentence, as it stands, there is an evidently absurd implication that the facilities for schooling could not be found in that state. Inquiry of the student who wrote the sentence showed that for very good reasons, if he was to free himself so that he could get time for school, he must leave not schoolless Massachusetts, but a neighborhood in which, for family reasons, he was not at liberty to follow his own judgment. The sentence unity is therefore not secured but merely indicated by completing it in this fashion :

I decided to get an education, and [recognizing the need of making a fresh start in new surroundings, I] immediately left Massachusetts.

Dr. H—— was called as soon as the accident was discovered, and [operated so skillfully that] though Mr. D—— has suffered severely, he is rapidly recovering.

There is no need of recipes for securing unity. It will come at the call of good common sense, and demands only the exclusion of obviously silly superfluities and the inclusion of all clauses without which the sentence seems un-unified instead of being merely lacking in complete coherence.

## EXERCISES

Early in the morning we were aroused by the howling of wolves, and after we had taken breakfast my uncle showed me the mine.

It was late in the afternoon when we arrived, somewhat fatigued, however, I soon recuperated partly on account of the fresh breeze and partly because the whole town had such a clean appearance, in fact there had just been a rain and all the streets, which were a bright-red brick, looked as if they had been scrubbed by hand and as a result made a great contrast with the bright-yellow buildings.

We explored the beach for long distances, picking up shells, although I never found any of consequence, but mother found a real large one, which the elevator boy in the hotel said was unusual and to this day you can hear the waves very plainly by holding it to your ear.

I thought this wooden elephant a queer thing and wanted to find out more about it, so father went to the hotel and inquired, and it seems there were stories in it and that cool drinks could be bought, which was certainly a nice treat for those who were hot, dusty, and tired from walking, but stranger than this elephant was a large, white, sand spider, which must have had a body fully two inches in width and large, black eyes.

That night was Mrs. Grenfell's ball and many times in later years has the scene come back to Honora.

Many people seemed to live in small huts scattered at considerable intervals along the shore, probably homes of fishermen and those who lived there much on the same account as certain Swiss people live where they do, or in other words for the harvest they reap during the popular season.

Several other incidents interested me and mother, also, for she always said she would like to see a storm on the ocean, and she had the chance then, for a severe storm came up, to such an extent that the water came under the hotels, which were all built on piles, and we were practically barred from the outside world as the streets were covered with water and the railroad connections with the mainland were cut off, and too we had the experience of riding in a typical sailing vessel, whose captain said it had won many

races, and as a result of winning one he wore a badge filled with many diamonds.

The banker waives all responsibility by pleading a delay. In 1909 every bank that failed which was controlled by the state paid its depositors in full, however, there were twenty-five immigrant banks that failed which had money of the immigrants amounting to \$1,495,295.

The early national forests were reserved for military purposes and natural parks, and at the present time there are one hundred and forty-nine national parks in the United States, Alaska and Porto Rico.

At school he met a young nobleman who was afterwards Lord Altamont and traveled with him through England, Ireland and Wales which experience he never forgot, and afterwards the two separated at Birmingham and so far as known never met again.

**Sentence coherence.** Coherence is the most vitally important principle in the effective handling of the sentence. It is the quality which makes the whole unit stick or hang together. To restate what has been said in different preceding chapters, coherence may be considered in three different aspects and may be secured in a corresponding number of ways.

*Coherence I: between thoughts or ideas.* Ideas which are connected in thought should be kept together, and, conversely, ideas which are disconnected or separated in thought should be kept apart. This is the phase of coherence chiefly applicable to the structural arrangement of a whole composition, which in its broader aspects has already been discussed (see pp. 34-37). It is hardly less vital to the proper construction of the paragraph, but even in the sentence the neglect of it frequently brings about rhetorical disaster.

There are many varieties of sentence dislocation which result in violations of this first principle of coherence.

1. *Misplacement of single words.* Upon the exact placing of such words as *only*, *even*, *also*, *not*, the exact meaning of

a sentence often hinges. Slightly out of place, they may pervert the sentence by giving the wrong significance or confuse it by producing ambiguity. With such a brief assertion as "I smiled at him," completely different ideas result as *only*, *even*, and *also* are shifted in position.

Only I smiled at him (all the others frowned).

I only smiled at him (speech could not be heard).

I smiled only at him (to the rest I paid no heed).

Even I smiled at him (although I had most to forgive).

I even smiled at him (in spite of all my pain).

I smiled even at him (though he had injured me more deeply than any of the others).

Also, I smiled at him (in addition to speaking).

I also smiled at him (as well as the others who smiled).

I smiled also at him (as well as at his brother).

Each one of these nine sentences taken alone is correct, but each one of them is capable of making confusion if the context does not justify the exact shade of meaning it conveys.

The negative adverb *not* is a tricky word. People often proceed on the rash assumption that it may be tossed into a sentence at almost any point, without regard to its surroundings; and there is a general disinclination to introduce it early. But the word has its revenge.

"Everybody will not go" is very different from "Not everybody will go"; for the first means "No one will go" and the second "Some will not go."

The fact to keep in mind is that a negative word belongs either to the subject or to the predicate and never to the whole sentence. The importance of locating it properly may be seen from the divergence between the two examples just supplied.

2. *Misplacement of phrases.* Trouble is apt to arise with adverbial phrases of time, place, manner, and so forth, through

separating them from the sentence elements they are intended to modify. The false or obscure import of the sentence is allowed to stand because the writer's intention is so clear to himself that he fails to detect the flaw in what he has written.

He stacked part of the wood he had chopped during the autumn in the kitchen.

As the sentence stands, it gives every reason to believe that the wood was both chopped and stacked in the kitchen. One may question the probability of so using the indoor room, but only as a matter of speculation. As long as such a doubt remains, it would better be settled in one of the following ways :

He stacked in the kitchen part of the wood he had chopped there during the autumn.

He stacked in the kitchen part of the wood he had chopped during the autumn.

Note similar defects in the following :

Charles I, the second of the Stuarts, was beheaded on charge of misuse of his power in 1649.

The old gardener, though he loved every tree and shrub on the estate, as is often the case, did a great deal of harm through clinging to old-fashioned methods.

Not caring for cards he spent a lonely evening while the others were absorbed in a game of whist on the windy promenade deck.

I heard him preach on Sunday with great pleasure.

He encountered his old friend very unexpectedly going into the post office.

3. *Misplacement of clauses.* Most frequently this type of error occurs in the separation of the relative pronoun from its antecedent.

I met Congressman Smith on Washington Street with his little son who is a candidate for reelection. He greeted me effusively.

If one read this sentence without using any guide but the order of the words, it would apparently lead to the conclusion that the small boy was the candidate instead of his congressman parent. In some way the sentence should be rearranged so that Mr. Smith and the pronoun are not so far separated ; or if this cannot be done, the idea should be cast into separate sentences. This sentence illustrates what is usually the case — that the separation of ideas which are connected in thought actually results in the supplementary fault of bringing together ideas which should be separated. Frequently a little ingenuity can recast the sentence into logical form. This case, however, results in a rhetorical stiffness which itself must be avoided. No normal person would be likely to say in conversation, "I met on Washington Street with his little son Congressman Smith, who is a candidate for reëlection. He greeted me effusively." This is so painfully correct and uncolloquial that under the circumstances we are probably forced to a further experiment.

I met Congressman Smith on Washington Street with his little son. Smith, who is a candidate for reëlection, greeted me effusively.

The remedy for the following sentence is obvious.

Perhaps the most famous is his picture of seven children carrying a festoon of fruit which is now in the Munich gallery.

The misplaced clause is not always a relative one. Occasionally adverbial clauses introduced by conjunctions become tangled in the context.

Though many of the voters are women, when we speak of them collectively, all citizens may be referred to with the masculine pronoun.

The rotary press emphasized the ineffectiveness of the simple old machine which survived in many shops, although the initial cost was much greater.

My hostess greeted me somewhat coldly, but I made my entrance without embarrassment as dinner had been ready for half an hour.

Dr. H—— was called as soon as the accident was discovered, and though he has suffered severely Mr. D—— is rapidly recovering.

Whether the sentence elements are words, phrases, or clauses, the same principle holds—that ideas which are connected in thought should be kept together.

#### EXERCISE

*Coherence I: coherence between ideas or thoughts.* As applied to the sentence, this is best stated, "Words which are connected in thought should be kept together, and, conversely, words which are unconnected or separated in thought should be kept apart."

The weight of the material lowers the cone-shaped cover and permits it to roll into the furnace.

Some nations erected beautiful temples to this supreme power, in which they placed idols representing the god.

Near the altar a large oak-tree grew in sturdy grandeur, among the branches of which idols were placed.

The material is next gathered together by means of a wooden funnel, which rests on the belt, and is forced into a long steel tube which shapes the clay into a long brick.

Before using the bottles they are placed in steam sterilizers under pressure of fifteen pounds, at a temperature of 160° C. for twenty to thirty minutes.

Here we were initiated into the long processes of education at six years of age, and for ten years and sometimes more, the school-house received the best part of our time while we in turn were molded unconsciously and generally unwillingly into the type of youth which our instructors sought to make us.

Furthermore stop to consider the great advantage St. Paul and Minneapolis would enjoy at the head of navigation on the Upper-Mississippi, being the greatest flour-milling center in the world.

The magnificent elms that line its residence streets in their great size are monuments of age.

About this time of the year there came a girl to the school from the Bluegrass region who was traveling through the mountains.

I kept myself afloat but all my pillows and rugs sank slowly to the bottom with the thermos bottle and crackers.

Though thirty years old and threatened with baldness, his face still retains its boyish expression.

Perched on the railing of my balcony I saw a dozen sparrows.

I frantically laid hold of an old log that had floated up the stream for support.

Crusoe tells how he lived for years on a desert island in a very plausible manner.

*Coherence II: coherence of structure.* Ideas which are equal in value should be similar in form, and, conversely, ideas which are unequal in value should be dissimilar in form. This method of securing coherence underlies the principle of parallel construction, which is carried out consistently in its most conspicuous form in the Psalms and Proverbs. Carried to its most extreme development, this is the distinguishing feature of the euphuistic prose of Shakespeare's day.

"We see, Martius, that where young folks are, they treat of love, when soldiers meet, they confer of war, painters of their colors, musicians of their crochets, and every one talketh of that most he liketh best. . . .

"If we fly thieves that steal our goods, shall we follow murderers that cut our throats? If we be heedy to come where wasps be, lest we be stung, shall we hazzard to run where Cupid is, where we shall be stifled?"

This kind of structure was also carried to a high state of development in the eighteenth-century heroic couplet, as in these lines from Pope's "Rape of the Lock":

This day, black omens threat the brightest Fair  
That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care ;  
Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight ;  
But what, or where, the fates have wrapped in night.  
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,  
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw ;  
Or stain her honor, or her new brocade ;  
Forget her prayers, or miss a masquerade ;  
Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball ;  
Or whether heaven has doomed that Shock<sup>1</sup> must fall.

From this kind of example one can learn the double lesson of how effective due balance of structure may be, and how objectionable it may be when employed to excess. The best way to indicate its desirability in informal discourse is to supply illustrations of its absence in student compositions. These may be grouped under two heads—the failure to express ideas of equal importance in similar form, and the use of similar forms for ideas of unequal importance.

1. *Lack of sentence balance.* In the former group the first type of violation involves the harnessing in pairs or series of ill-assorted words, abstract and concrete nouns, verbal nouns and substantives, or adjectives or nouns and phrases.

I was impressed with his dignity, magnanimity and the fact that he seemed perfectly honest.

The third detail would better stand *his apparent honesty*.

Man's experience is divided into knowing, emotion and willing.

As long as the series *knowing, feeling, and willing* are not only similar in form but commonly used together, it is better to keep them intact.

He was courageous, self-controlled, and he never flinched.

This could better be rounded out with *and unflinching*.

<sup>1</sup> Her pet dog.

2. *Careless yoking of phrases with clauses.* A second group of errors comes from careless yoking of phrases with clauses as in each of the following :

Fast Day, established as a kind of Spring Thanksgiving, and which was celebrated devoutly for nearly two centuries, finally degenerated into the opening day of the professional baseball season.

He labored up the street burdened with a winter overcoat and he carried a heavy suit-case in each hand.

She resented his being so familiar and that he failed to lift his hat.

3. *Needless shift of subject, etc.* Another sort of failure of a less obvious kind is in the needless shift of subject, tense, voice, or number. Within the limits of a sentence or between successive sentences a needless shift of subject, tense, or voice is likely to endanger coherence. There sometimes occurs, too, an unnecessary shift in number. The shift in voice and that in subject are likely to occur together.

We went through the slum districts, and many interesting people were encountered.

This contains a needless shift of subject and voice.

Now we pass into the large open ward; here all was quiet, orderly, and attractive.

The change in tense is unnecessary and distracting.

It is necessary to look backward for a moment; you are reminded of the complexity of the whole scheme; I can think of nothing which is a higher tribute to human ingenuity.

The three subjects should all be in the same person, unless there is a definite reason for changing them.

4. *Misleading balance in sentences.* The complementary violation of coherence in structure involves the use of similar forms for members of unequal value. Sometimes through a

bold appeal to the reader's power of interpretation such expressions are defensible, as in the case of "Spare the rod and spoil the child" in place of "If you spare the rod, you will spoil the child," which is evidently not so vigorous. Kipling often deliberately seeks the reader's attention by perversity in this respect, as when he writes, "They came out into the company street with belts and mops and bad language." Under this head come all apparent compound sentences where the coördinating conjunction connects successive clauses which are not in coördinate relationship. The common and careless use of the coördinating conjunction in place of the proper specific subordinating conjunction is a violation of both the second and third principles of coherence and will be mentioned under the latter head.

The so-called mixed constructions are violations of coherence. These involve the omission of a word or words which cannot be supplied from the context. The failure to express omitted words within the limits of a sentence implies that the uncompleted phrase is similar to another which is expressed in full. At the end of a sentence such omission is permissible.

Napoleon is as great if not greater than Cæsar.

Here the word *as*, omitted before *if*, is not elsewhere expressed. The sentence is therefore faulty. It is stiff and pedantic to write or say,

Napoleon was as great as, if not greater than, Cæsar.

But it is quite allowable to put it,

Napoleon was as great as Cæsar, if not greater.

For in this case the omission comes at the end, where there is an appreciable pause long enough to permit the supply of missing words without interrupting the flow of discourse.

Coherence I, p. 103) or by the form of a sentence (see Coherence II, p. 108), then definite connective words should be used. Attention to this precept will lead toward a scrupulous and accurate use of relative pronouns and conjunctions—the two parts of speech which seem to be most carelessly slighted and misused.

1. *In the case of pronouns.* In the case of pronouns, aside from dislocation of the sentence, which should be remedied by rearrangement (see p. 106), there are other flagrant violations.

a. The use of a pronoun which refers back to an idea and not to a word. Pronouns, however, as the name indicates, stand as temporary substitutes for nouns and not for general concepts. It is therefore not legitimate to use them in the following ways :

A great deal of confusion was caused by his tardy arrival, which was very unfortunate.

Here the relative is adrift ; for neither *confusion* nor *tardy arrival* are complete antecedents. Rather, it is idea of confusion-caused-by-tardiness ; but for such a composite idea a single relative pronoun may not stand.

He burned his candle at both ends and paid for it with a nervous breakdown.

Yet he underfed and overworked his horses, which he had no right to do.

b. A further error of a slightly different type is the use of a pronoun referring back to a word which itself only half implies the proper antecedent.

He went in for stamp collecting and before long had more than a thousand of them.

He could not help noting how carefully dressed Frederick was, and as a consequence hurried back to his rooms and changed his own.

Irritable persons are so impressed by his fine self-control that they attempt to overcome it in themselves.

His base-running was wonderfully daring, but faulty because he often failed to touch them as he made the circuit.

In the following sentence an adverb is similarly at fault :

A great number of girls come from their homes in the morning, attend classes, eat luncheon there, and then go home.

c. Confusion sometimes arises through the use of personal pronouns which might apply to more than one antecedent. Errors of this sort, like violations of sentence unity, are apt to be absurd as well as perplexing. The only effective prescription is an application of common sense and the introduction of as many nouns as are necessary to clear away all doubt.

Androclus and the lion both being gentlemen, "he's" gambolled through the retold narrative very mixingly. A listener had to know the story from A to Izzard in order to tell which of the characters was at work.

"And he growled and lashed his tail which softened his heart," finished Kenneth, weak but sparring bravely. "So, when he roared, he struck his brow and asked himself, 'Shall this poor beast suffer?' When he growled again. Then he with his own hands pulled out the thorn. This made him lick his paw and thank him with his gently moving tail. So he smiled. Then he crouched at his feet. And he said, 'O beast, thou art kinder than is man.' — MARION HILL, "In the Wake of William Tell"

After getting into the fly paper several times and pulling the cats out of it, I at last hung them on the kitchen stovepipe.

2. *Importance of subordinating conjunctions.* The proper use of the subordinating conjunctions has been detailed in the paragraphs on the complex sentence (p. 99 ff.). The neglect of these through the use of other constructions which do not indicate the exact shade of meaning is the most insistently prevailing weakness in student sentence composition. Even

when sentences thus defective are put before the student, on account of the fact that they are in a measure correct as far as grammar and syntax go and faulty only in their lack of logic, he is apt at first not to see their weakness. Moreover, it must be admitted that in certain cases, for the sake of bold informality, such violations might be defended, as in the case of the maxim "Spare the rod and spoil the child," already cited. In general, it may be said here, as of many other a freedom of speech, that the simplest test is to inquire whether the looser form was deliberately or accidentally used. Instances of sheer rhetorical shiftlessness, however, are all too numerous.

*a.* Failure to use the proper subordinating conjunction.

I got to church twenty minutes late and took a back seat.

This is evidently a real causal complex sentence.

*b.* The use of the ablative absolute construction is born of a similar kind of neglectfulness. This Latin construction, which is responsible for a loose English equivalent, usually shows in its original context just which shade of meaning is to be read into the sentence. English usage, however, demands explicit precision. The same reader who will enjoy exercising ingenuity at some other point will resent it here, where we have the machinery for achieving exactness.

The army being eight miles away, he proceeded eastward.

This sentence taken out of its context may be interpreted in a variety of ways, the sanity of each of them being determined only as we know or supply the proper circumstances. These determined, we might translate it more exactly :

As the army was eight miles away, he proceeded eastward;  
Although the army was eight miles away, he proceeded eastward;  
When the army was eight miles away, he proceeded eastward.

c. The substitution of adverbs for conjunctions leads to weak and unsatisfactory coherence. The greatest offender in this respect is the temporal adverb *then*, found sometimes in literature, but to be used with extreme caution.

Then, the matter of sanitation should also be considered.

Then, too, we may refer to the increased prices as an added reason.

Occasionally the use of *again*, *once more*, and kindred expressions is legitimate. Among amateurs, however, the use of *then*, and particularly the offensive *then too*, as it develops into a shabby mannerism is very unfortunate.

d. The careless use of participial modifiers often produces absurd instances of incoherence, the chief of which is so commonly encountered that the designation of "hanging participle" has been devised to describe it. The rule which will eliminate occurrences of hanging participles is as follows: Whenever the connection of a participle at the beginning of a sentence is not otherwise designated, it may be assumed to modify the subject of the sentence.

Walking across the boulevard this morning, a runaway horse violently collided with aged Mr. Jones.

It is perfectly evident that the runaway horse was not walking, and yet the habit of the mind of the reader, in default of any other indication, leads him to assume that this detached participle modifies the subject of the sentence until the context warns him to the contrary. The sentence may be remedied in two ways, either by indicating at the outset the connection of *walking* or by making the noun to which it refers the subject of the sentence.

While aged Mr. Jones was walking, etc., or Walking across the boulevard this morning, aged Mr. Jones was, etc.

*e.* The use of the "feminine demonstrative," which is a feeble device for securing emphasis, usually impairs firm coherence. Boys and men have their distinctly rhetorical sins which usually border on vulgarity, but this particular offense, characteristic of feminine speech, is often carried by infection over into written discourse. It shows itself most commonly in the use of *so* and *such* in exclamatory sentences. There may be a defense for saying, "She is so sweet, and has such lovely eyes!" or "I am so glad to see you!" But when the practice is introduced into longer declarative sentences, the effect is slipshod.

We enjoyed the trip from beginning to end; it was such a new experience.

A statement of this sort is actually a bungled result sentence and should read,

The trip was such a new experience that we enjoyed it from beginning to end.

The feminine demonstrative in a more literal sense occurs in the extravagant misuse of *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* as adjective pronouns. Introduced when there has been no foregoing word to justify, they distract by suggesting coherence where none exists.

Going down street this morning I saw this man standing by this shop window, when suddenly he turned and said to those boys who were passing, etc.

#### EXERCISE

*Coherence III: coherence through connecting words.* When coherence is not secured by the arrangement of ideas or by the form of the sentence, then definite connecting words should be used.

The flood evil is the underlying cause of trouble in the Mississippi basin, with destruction of property together with loss of life.

While the crops derive great benefit yearly from the film of new rich soil which is spread over the land, the ditches fill up very rapidly, and each farmer expects to work several weeks on the ditch each fall and spring scooping out the fine salt and sand.

Amusements, of which the city boy has any number, are limited, so the boys use their time in various forms of mischief.

After a while, however, this curiosity waned, and the Klan would have died a natural death, but the country people reading the city papers began to grow interested.

I had forgotten the name of the Settlement House, so I had to go down to the Training School to see if they could tell me where my friend lived.

They are carpenters and bricklayers, for which they receive high wages.

I live about two miles from the University, which makes the trip to and from a short and untedious one.

It embodies very nearly every good feature of the small independent store, and in addition makes for uniformity of quality and for cheapened production.

The plan being immediately approved, we lost no time in preparing for the journey, and when darkness came that night, we found ourselves steaming northward.

And so we knew of no rail connections with any other point, consequently we knew little about when or how we should reach our destination.

The stopper is again replaced and the bottle packed in ice so that the bacteria present may not multiply while carrying the water to the laboratories.

An interested follower of all sports himself, it was only natural that I should become a lover of all branches.

Harvest hands are often scarce, and this prolongs the threshing.

A shortage of cars for shipping causes the grain to be left in heaps open to the weather, which always depreciates its value.

It requires time for the individual members to become filled with the crowd spirit, but when once it has been done, the process of "working up" becomes easier for subsequent occasions.

This is the only time in the year that they have such an opportunity and they certainly make the most of it while it lasts.

We hear and read so much of the schism of the Republican party, while we are really not aware of an equally momentous division in the Democratic contingency.

Then, also, there are so many things going on around us, both in nature and through the efforts of man, which invite explanation.

It is these duties that must be impressed on the young child, and hence the biblical stories present the best of material.

Philanthropic associations say that the family is worse off than if cared for by private charity. But until it is more than an experiment few conclusions can be reached.

The theaters and even the moving-picture shows are not attractive because they do not understand the English language or American customs and habits.

The membership of their societies was increasing, which showed that the belief was spreading among the people.

These prohibited plays immediately create a furor and come into great demand at the public libraries; and the censorship has thus defeated its own ends.

Riding home in a street car one afternoon, my attention was drawn to a girl standing near the front of the car.

The mother wants her daughter to be a stenographer and feels that her daughter ought to be studying that rather than geometry or Caesar.

Well she remembered that trip abroad with her mother, Randolph's aunt, and how attentive he was, and showed them the best restaurants in which to dine.

Ethel wore a blue tailor-made gown trimmed with buff braid, and which fitted her slender figure with military exactness.

One of its legs was broken at the ankle joint and its four little toes hung helplessly down.

**Punctuation.** The most important rules of punctuation are presented here in condensed form. There is almost universal agreement except with respect to the comma, in the use of which there is a good deal of latitude. In general two preliminary statements may be made: the tendency of the day

is to simplify and minimize punctuation ; and the whole aim of punctuating is to promote clearness.

*The period.* A period should follow every declarative sentence, and such imperative sentences as are not in the nature of exclamations. A period should also be used after every ordinary abbreviation ; with a few technical and scientific abbreviations it is omitted.

*Exclamation and interrogation points.* The exclamation point is generally used with any expression of marked emotion.

The interrogation point must be used at the end of every direct question. It is not used with indirect questions.

*The colon.* Very rarely the colon is used between two independent statements which are so related that the writer wishes to include them in one sentence. Cases of this sort, however, are to-day almost always punctuated with the semicolon.

The special use of the colon is to indicate that something of importance is to follow. It is thus used : (1) after the opening phrase in a letter ; (2) after the salutation in a speech ; (3) before a formal statement ; (4) before a list ; (5) before a long quotation ; (6) before an explanatory conclusion to a statement.

1. My dear John :
2. Mr. Toastmaster, Ladies and Gentlemen :
3. It becomes our duty, therefore, to state our conclusion :
4. We found the following goods on hand :
5. Let me conclude with the words of the original document :
6. The list includes but one more speaker : President Woodrow Wilson, guest of the evening.

*The semicolon.* The semicolon is used within a sentence to set apart clauses which need some demarcation stronger than a comma. These may be (1) clauses in a compound

sentence where no conjunction is used ; (2) a series of short clauses needing an emphatic staccato effect ; (3) a series of rather long phrases of equal value in the sentence ; (4) a straight enumeration of items.

1. They toiled through a narrow but almost impenetrable thicket ; then stumbled painfully over some miles of fresh-plowed field.
2. It was pitch dark ; the wind was blowing a gale ; the cold was bitter ; the sheets of spray froze as they fell.
3. (For a series of long phrases see the last sentence in the preceding paragraph.)
4. The list of guests included the following : four representatives of the U.S. Navy ; three representatives of the Army ; eight members of Congress ; two cabinet officers ; etc.

*The comma.* The comma is used to promote Clearness by marking the slightest interruptions in sequence of thought or sentence construction. The usage at present is to omit commas if they are not indispensable.

1. *Punctuating series of words or phrases.* (a) Words or phrases in a series not connected by conjunctions are separated by commas ; (b) in a series of phrases with a conjunction between the last two, each group should be set off by a comma ; (c) in a series of adjectives, if the last one is virtually part of a compound noun, the comma before it is omitted.

- a. He has a brisk, keen, eager way of speaking.
- b. They retreated at first with reluctance, then with less show of resistance, and finally at top speed.
- c. Camp was pitched on the shore of a broad, navigable inland lake.

2. *Separating the chief elements in the sentence.* (a) Closely connected clauses in compound sentences are separated by commas ; (b) subordinate clauses which precede the principal clauses in complex sentences are followed by commas.

- a. They came in a great hurry, and left after a very few minutes.
- b. Although the evening was hot, he insisted on going indoors.

3. *Setting apart certain special constructions.* (a) Non-restrictive relative clauses, (b) participial phrases, (c) adjective phrases, (d) words or phrases in apposition, (e) parenthetical phrases or clauses, (f) words in direct address, and (g) post-positive conjunctions are usually both preceded and followed by commas.

- a. The commanding officer, who saw the enemies' mistake, took immediate advantage of it.
- b. The valedictorian, looking in vain to heaven, sought the next word.
- c. A cold, but delightfully refreshing, wind was blowing.
- d. A venerable gentleman, the presiding officer, interposed.
- e. I came to ask, we are all eager to know, how John is getting on.
- f. The main question, my dear friend, is still unsettled.
- g. Napoleon, however, was undismayed.

4. *Special technical uses of the comma.* These uses include, among many others, the following: (a) the comma is used to denote the omission of a word which is understood from the context; (b) before a direct quotation; (c) to separate two identical, or very similar, words; (d) to separate successive proper nouns; (e) to separate successive numerals; (f) to separate items in a date or an address.

- a. With Jennie he was all sunshine; with me, clouds and darkness.
- b. I replied, "I can't afford to."
- c. It was this, that I pointed out.
- d. In Servia, Japan is little known.
- e. In room 207, 63 pupils were crowded.
- f. Saturday, September 19, 1914.

*The dash.* The dash indicates a vigorous interruption in the line of thought and is used (1) before and after an independent passage which is both structurally and logically separable from the context; (2) after a word or phrase which

needs special emphasis ; (3) before a summary or repetition of a foregoing passage ; (4) to mark an incomplete sentence, or (5) a sudden or abrupt change.

1. I hope you realize — here comes the car — how much I have enjoyed the visit.
2. My chief objection was this — the charge was exorbitant.
3. The number of delegates, the lack of common sympathy, the excitement under which they were meeting — all reduced the hope of achieving results.
4. This was but the beginning ; soon after —
5. I'm glad to have seen you — and glad to have seen the last of you.

*The apostrophe.* The apostrophe is used to indicate (1) the possessive case ; (2) the omission of a letter or letters ; (3) the omission of figures in a number ; (4) the plurals of numbers, letters, rare or artificial words, and proper nouns ending in *s*.

1. John's book.
2. Don't, ne'er, ass't.
3. The class of '15.
4. In the '80's, the three R's, the "Just So's," the two Brooks'.

*Parentheses and brackets.* Parentheses, ( ), are used to mark inserted or parenthetical passages which are not sufficiently set off by commas (see p. 122), or dashes (see p. 123). Such passages are long or involved clauses, or whole sentences, or illustrative material, as in the preceding sentence.

Brackets, [ ], are used (1) to inclose an explanation ; (2) to inclose words interpolated in a quotation ; (3) to supply an omission ; (4) to serve as parentheses within parentheses.

1. [These were the exact words of the witness. — Editor.]
2. The kindly autocrat [Dr. Johnson] replied at once.
3. This was written by Dante [Gabriel Rossetti].
4. This was a contention of President McKinley (in his inaugural address [the second, in 1901]).

*Quotation marks and dialogue.* Quotation marks are double (" ") for a direct quotation, and single (' ') for a quotation within a quotation. A quoted passage should begin and end with quotation marks. A quoted passage broken into paragraphs should have quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph, but at the end of only the last paragraph.

In transcribing dialogue, quotation marks should exclude all descriptive comments on the speech or action of the participants, as follows: (1) the descriptive words are set off by commas if they are inserted into a speech; (2) followed by commas if they precede a short remark; (3) followed by a colon if they precede a long or formal speech; (4) preceded by a comma if they follow a completed speech; (5) but not preceded if this speech is a question or exclamation.

1. "This way, boys," he said, "I see the lighthouse."
2. He replied slowly, "I greatly question that."
3. The remarks of the speaker were in part as follows: "It gives me great pleasure . . ."
4. "I quite agree," he answered.
5. "Run for your lives!" they shouted.

The comma at the end of a speech or quoted passage is always included within the quotation marks. The semicolon, colon, period, interrogation point, and exclamation point are not included between the quotation marks unless they are themselves part of the quotation.

## CHAPTER V

### SENTENCE INTEREST

*The need of more than Clearness in the sentence.* The element of variety in nature. Development of variety in the spoken sentence. Development of variety in written discourse.

*Characteristics of the normal sentence.* Three amateurish ways not to seek variety. Variation in sentence length. Variation from normal order.

*Methods of gaining emphasis in the sentence.* The use of balanced structure. The use of alliteration and assonance. The preservation of euphony. The use of contrast.

*The periodic and the loose sentence.* Suspense in the periodic sentence. The spineless loose sentence. The weakly ended loose sentence.

*The defect of wordiness in the sentence.* Single words to be stricken out. Repetitions to be dropped. Wordiness needing total revision.

### THE NEED OF MORE THAN CLEARNESS IN THE SENTENCE

It is probably evident from the foregoing chapter that the avoidance of error in the sentence is an accomplishment quite worth achieving and one which the average writer may well afford to strive for long and hard. Yet, in itself, it is at best only a negative virtue. If one could be satisfied with mere correctness or Clearness, one could gain this by mastering the simplest forms of sentence, writing them all in normal order, avoiding embarrassment of length, and consistently using these forms and these alone. The adoption of such a policy, however, would result in such an unmitigated tameness that the work would be robbed of its best chances of securing interest.

**The element of variety in nature.** The error in accepting correctness on such terms lies in the fact that the resulting product would be painfully monotonous, and that continued monotony is an experience which the adult mind will not put up with. It is a violation of natural usage. Almost all natural experiences are characterized by variety. There are, to be sure, certain great monotonous expanses of sea, sky, and land, but there are no cases in nature of the iterated use of identical forms. The mind rebels against these as against "a continual dropping in a very rainy day." A row of houses built on the same plan amuses the observer if he merely passes them, but wearies him if he chances to be a resident of one of them. A room or a suite of rooms furnished in one color lacks distinction, and excites momentary interest only because of its strange monotony. For similar reasons, in the reading of written literature or the hearing of spoken discourse, any mannerism marked enough to become noticeable is certain to weary the reader or hearer and distract him from the content of what is addressed to him.

**Development of variety in spoken sentences.** This rebellion against monotony is a characteristic of grown-up people. The development of an individual or a nation from childhood to adulthood is marked by a continual progress toward complexity and variety of speech. The child begins with a single monosyllable and usually employs this to carry an imperative command ; "Up!" means "Lift me up," "Drink!" means "Give me a glass of water." He moves on usually to an exclamatory form of sentence, in which "Pretty flower!" means "That is a pretty flower" or more likely "See that pretty flower," and soon progresses further to the interrogative form — a form which he clings to as a staple method

of communication for some years. While he is using this he has mastered the simple sentence and progressed to the compound — "I am going now, and he is going too," "We got into the water, but we didn't get our clothes wet"; finally, as his last acquisition, he achieves the complex sentence — "If I am good, may I stay up till seven o'clock?" "When I have eaten this, may I have some more?"

**Development of variety in written discourse.** This sort of primitive progression is apparent in early prose discourse, as examples of early English will show. The sentences are apt to be more frequently compound than complex; and in many instances where the complex form is really used, the old coördinating conjunctions still give the primitive simplicity of effect.

So Syr Bedwere departed, and by the waye he behelde that noble swerde, that the pomel and the hafte was al of precyous stones; and thenne he sayd to hymself, "Yf I throwe this ryche swerde in the water, therof shal never come good, but harme and losse." And thenne Syr Bedwere hydde Excalybur under a tree. And so as sone as he myght he came ageyn unto the kyng, and sayd he had ben at the water, and had throwen the swerde in to the water.

Moreover there is a certain rude monotony about folk literature; a frank omission to achieve variety. This appears in the Psalms and Proverbs, in the old epics such as "Beowulf," and in the modern work of such a poet as Whitman — who in a certain measure consciously emulated the style of the primitive poets. The gain from this sort of discourse is secured through the poetic swing that comes with all uniformity of verse structure. It is dangerous to rely on the same device in most prose.

The heart of her husband trusteth in her,  
And he shall have no lack of gain.  
She doeth him good and not evil  
All the days of her life.  
She seeketh wool and flax,  
And worketh willingly with her hands.  
She is like the merchant-ships,  
She bringeth her food from afar.  
She riseth also while it is yet night,  
And giveth meat to her household,  
And their task to her maidens. — Proverbs xxxi, 11-15

When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and foot-standers — when the mass is densest ;  
When the façades of the houses are alive with people, — when eyes gaze, riveted, tens of thousands at a time ;  
When the guests from the islands advance — when the pageant moves forward, visible ;  
When the summons is made, — when the answer that waited thousands of years, answers,  
I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge with the crowd, and gaze with them. — WALT WHITMAN, "A Broadway Pageant," II, 16-20

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NORMAL SENTENCE

The writer can best achieve due variety in prose only after recognizing that there is a normal kind of sentence to be used under ordinary circumstances, and to be departed from reasonably and consciously. Unless there is this ordinary use of normal length, structure, and order, the written or spoken result will be chaotic. The commonest kind of sentence, as already indicated, is simple, medium in length, declarative, loose in structure, and without balance. A succession of a dozen or fifteen sentences, all characterized by any three of these five traits, will in all likelihood lack the variety essential to Interest in writing. The two characteristics which are

most likely to take care of themselves are variation between simple, compound, and complex sentences, and, to some degree, variations in relative length. The one feature which is the most constant is the use of the declarative form. Finally, a series of sentences which differ in all these respects may still be monotonous in effect unless some attention is given to emphasis as it is determined by the order of the parts. The normal order of a simple sentence brings first the subject and its modifiers, then the predicate and its modifiers. The normal order of a compound sentence will bring its successive independent clauses, each in the normal order of a simple sentence. The normal order of a complex sentence will demand first subject and then predicate in each of its clauses, and, according to usage, the introduction sometimes of a principal clause first and sometimes of a subordinate. No rules are necessary on these points. The question as to whether the sentence sounds natural will determine whether it is normal.

**Three amateurish ways not to seek variety.** In the very moment of advising the writer to seek variety in the handling of his sentences, it is necessary to warn him against certain much-abused and amateurish ways of going about the job. Although the declarative form is so constant a factor in good prose that a man can write a whole book effectively without employing any other type, yet so obvious is the effect of shifting to the exclamatory and the interrogative that a word of caution against developing this habit is usually in place. The theme writer may well adopt as a rule for guidance, "Stick to the declarative." The abuse of the rhetorical question and the hortatory conclusion is frequent, and among college students the effective use of them is rather rare.

Another sentence feature like the declarative form in offering seductive but often ineffective chances for variety is the prevailing use of the third person. The first or the second should not be employed except for specific reasons. In composition, as has already been mentioned, the personal quality of authorship is highly desirable, but is never to be confused with the wanton introduction of the first personal pronoun. More objectionable than this, however, is the introduction of the second. The reader has a certain sensitive disinclination toward having his privacy invaded. He does not wish to be shut into a corner or buttonholed. To have the writer addressing him as *you* with assurances of what "you can see" or what "you can't help admitting" puts him on the defensive. The reader occupies the strategical point of vantage, for if an author annoys or bores him, he can always lay down the book. Finally, in the normal style—and this applies only to narrative writing—the proper past tense is the one to use. The frequent resort to the historical present seems to youthful writers like an easy expedient for stimulating interest; but, as a matter of fact, in inexperienced hands it is far from likely to achieve this result, because it is so difficult to handle with consistency that its effectiveness is ruined by the abuse of the unskillful.

**Variation in sentence length.** Sentence variety is therefore the chief avenue of approach to Interest in sentence usage. Now that certain injudicious devices for achieving Interest through variety have been mentioned, legitimate measures for gaining this end should naturally follow. Most of these, directly or indirectly, will come under the head of devices for securing emphasis. A very important way to catch and hold the reader is to adjust the length of sentences to the

subject matter in hand. The same writer, if he is at all sensitive to what he is doing, will use different sentence lengths for different kinds of material. Spirited discourse demands the brief sentence. This, of course, is especially true of exciting narrative.

That was the motor-car from the Hall making that hideous noise. Louis Rossier, the chauffeur, going by himself, of course ! He always broke out of bounds when alone, and that speed was something awful. . . . Would he never slacken down at that bend in the road ? Apparently not. A terrible corner that, to whirl a motor around at sixty miles an hour ! He could hear Jim's little dog bark in answer to his own, but he was still some minutes' walk from the road. . . .

What was that cry ? What were those cries, rather — cries of panic or of warning, with a woman's shriek above them ? And what was that terrible cry in a voice he knew ? — Jim's voice ! — DE MORGAN, " It Never Can Happen Again "

This use of short staccato sentences is not limited to narrative alone. In spirited exposition, and in persuasion in which the author is appealing to the reader's feelings as well as his intellect, this method is effective.

Yet even the Latin was giving way to a younger rival. France united at that time almost every species of ascendancy. Her military glory was at its height. She had vanquished mighty coalitions. She had dictated treaties. She had subjugated great cities and provinces. She had forced the Castilian pride to yield her the precedence. She had summoned Italian princes to prostrate themselves at her foot-stool. Her authority was supreme in all matters of good breeding, from a duel to a minuet. She determined how long a gentleman's coat must be cut, how long his peruke must be, whether his heels must be high or low, and whether the lace on his hat must be broad or narrow. In literature she gave law to the world. The fame of her great writers filled Europe. — MACAULAY, " History of England "

The appropriateness of the short sentence to these sorts of subject matter makes it equally unfit for discursive or meditative discourse.

The literary artist is of necessity a scholar, and in what he proposes to do will have in mind, first of all, the scholar and the scholarly conscience—the male conscience in this matter, as we must think it, under a system of education which still to so large an extent limits real scholarship to men. In his self-criticism, he supposes always that sort of reader who will go (full of eyes) warily, considerately, though without consideration for him, over the ground which the female conscience traverses so lightly, so amiably. For the material in which he works is no more a creation of his own than the sculptor's marble.—WALTER PATER, "Essay on 'Style'"

**Variation from normal order.** Of a more specific sort, and more in the nature of devices, other departures from simplest sentence types can be attempted. Obvious among these is the departure from the normal order of sentence structure—a method of securing emphasis by putting an important word in an unusual and therefore important place. Other things being equal, we would say, "I used to see him every day at noon." But if in speaking of him we were emphasizing his punctuality, the last two words of the sentence might better come first.

At half past eight each morning as regularly as the clock he used to leave his home. At nine he handed his hat and cane to the office boy and seated himself at his desk. From eleven to twelve he received interviewers. At noon I used to see him every day set out for his lunch at the Club, . . .

The variations of normal order for the purpose of emphasis in the sentence, and frequently, too, for the purpose of securing coherence between sentences, give room for great skill in sentence handling.

**EXERCISE**

Observe the following selections with reference to the average and variety of sentence length in each. In this respect is each adjusted to the subject matter? Rewrite the first, securing a wider variety in sentence length. Observe the two paragraphs again with reference to the deviations from normal order. In what proportion of cases in each paragraph is the order more effective because of these changes?

First, then, "Look well to your speech." It is commonly supposed that when a man seeks literary power he goes to his room and plans an article for the press. But this is to begin literary culture at the wrong end. We speak a hundred times for every once we write. The busiest writer produces little more than a volume a year, not so much as his talk would amount to in a week. Consequently through speech it is usually decided whether a man is to have command of his language or not. If he is slovenly in his ninety-nine cases of talking, he can seldom pull himself up to strength and exactitude in the hundredth case of writing. A person is made in one piece, and the same being runs through a multitude of performances. Whether words are uttered on paper or to the air, the effect on the utterer is the same. Vigor or feebleness results according as energy or slackness has been in command. I know that certain adaptations to a new field are often necessary. A good speaker may find awkwardnesses in himself when he comes to write, a good writer when he speaks. And certainly cases occur where a man exhibits distinct strength in one of the two, speaking or writing, and not in the other. But such cases are rare. As a rule, language once within our control can be employed for oral or for written purposes. And since the opportunities for oral practice enormously outbalance those for written, it is the oral which are chiefly significant in the development of literary power. We rightly say of the accomplished writer that he shows a mastery of his own tongue. — **GEORGE H. PALMER**, "Self-Cultivation in English"

As I thus lay, between content and longing, a faint noise stole towards me through the pines. I thought, at first, it was the crowing

of cocks or the barking of dogs at some very distant farm; but steadily and gradually it took articulate shape in my ears, until I became aware that a passenger was going by upon the highroad in the valley, and singing loudly as he went. There was more of good-will than grace in his performance; but he trolled with ample lungs; and the sound of his voice took hold upon the hillside and set the air shaking in the leafy glens. I have heard people passing by night in sleeping cities; some of them sang; one, I remember, played loudly on the bagpipes. I have heard the rattle of a cart or carriage spring up suddenly after hours of stillness, and pass, for some minutes, within the range of my hearing as I lay abed. There is a romance about all who are abroad in the black hours, and with something of a thrill we try to guess their business. But here the romance was double: first, this glad passenger, lit internally with wine, who sent up his voice in music through the night; and then I, on the other hand, buckled into my sack, and smoking alone in the pine-woods between four and five thousand feet towards the stars. — ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, "A Night Among the Pines "

#### METHODS OF GAINING EMPHASIS IN THE SENTENCE

**The use of balanced structure.** Again the judicious use of balance in sentence structure is effective in maintaining Interest. As mentioned in the preceding chapter (p. 108), the use of elaborate and frequent devices for producing symmetry, as soon as it becomes an evident practice of an author, defeats its own end. The writers most characterized by balanced structure still use the simple forms in far more than half of their sentences. But employed with discretion, parallel structure (which is simply another name for the same thing) catches the eye and the ear of the reader. It is for this reason — and also, doubtless, because of the ease of composition in this vein — that the preacher and orator so frequently resort to it. Macaulay, fluent member of Parliament that he was, habitually resorted to it in print, as he continually employed

it in oral discourse. In the passage already quoted to illustrate the use of short sentences (p. 132), the persistent use of balanced clauses is also evident. As indicated also in the previous chapter (pp. 108 ff.), the use of parallel structure has the double value of insuring coherence as well as emphasis.

**The use of alliteration and assonance.** In securing emphasis together with coherence, alliteration and assonance are minor devices which may be used when and where the writer pleases, but which are most commonly drawn into service in balanced or parallel structure. They contribute to emphasis because they throw into distinguished isolation a few words selected from out of the entire sentence. For a moment they create a kind of petty sentence-aristocracy. They make for coherence because they put into conspicuously similar form, ideas which by comparison or contrast are of equal rhetorical value. Thus in theory they promise well, and in practice they fulfill the promise because they appeal to the rather elementary love of jingle to which all normal people respond from Mother Goose age upward. Phrases, clauses, and sentences which employ them appeal to the ear and beg to be repeated ; they cling in the memory, and if not too often introduced, come upon the reader's eye with a pleasant air of friendliness. We make a practical acknowledgment of this appetite for jingle in the large number of stock expressions which are common coin in daily speech. Sometimes these are mere phrases : "by hook or by crook," "make or break," "bag and baggage," "pots and pans." Sometimes they take the shape of campaign catchwords, such as the famous "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion," "Fifty-four, forty or fight." Very often they give the thrust to maxims and proverbs : "A stitch in time saves nine," "What's food

for the goose is sauce for the gander," ". . . makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

**The preservation of euphony.** Effective as these turns of expression are, the old adage about fire would apply to any one of them — "It makes a good servant but a bad master." In other words, these methods should be under the control of the writer and not dominating mannerisms. Although the repetition of a given sound is often very effective, the accidental iteration of a sound or syllable may seriously impair the sentence. If one should write, for instance, "Through the judicious use of euphony, the sound of a sentence is usually improved," the needless and blundering repetition of the long-*u* sound and the sibilant could only distract the reader. It is well to guard against excessive use of words ending in the same suffix, such as *-ness*, *-tion*, *-ation*, *-ity*, *-ility*, and so forth. Similarly, although the repetition of a given word is at times a distinct aid to the writer in carrying the reader through a long or involved passage, a repetition which is the result of accident or laziness may be a handicap rather than a help. For example, in the first draft of an earlier chapter of this book the following sentence occurred: "It is easy to complete each one of them in a dozen or twenty ways, and when it is completed one perceives that the completing part of the sentence could stand by itself." There is no virtue in the threefold use of a single verb in this sentence when there are plenty of good equivalents, and the sentence reads much better in a revised form: "It is easy to fill out each one of them in a dozen or twenty ways, and when so completed it will be seen that each concluding part could stand by itself." A common-sense test to distinguish between well-contrived assonance and a violation of euphony or between repetition

or parallel structure and senseless iteration can be made by answering the question, "Was this effect the result of careless accident or of conscious adjustment of sound to effect?"

**The use of contrast.** Closely allied with the use of assonance, alliteration, and repetition, and equally serviceable in securing emphasis, is the use of contrast or antithesis in the sentence. The appeal of this method of construction is comparable to the sound appeal of the methods just discussed, but a shade less elementary. There are certain pairs of words which so naturally pull in harness that the mind reacts to them as to alliterated combinations. *Night and day, good and evil, black and white, now and then, come and go, great and small*, belong to this class, and also belonging to it are certain forms in which the contrast is supplemented by alliteration — such as *vice and virtue, prince and peasant, the lion and the lamb*. The appeal of contrast to the imagination appears again in many set expressions which take the form of maxims. "Make haste slowly" is one of the most compressed of these. Others more obvious are "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," "Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest," "Where ignorance is bliss, 't is folly to be wise," "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." To be conscious of the effectiveness of contrast, to be able to use it moderately at command, and to be able to refrain from using it except when it has a real service to perform, distinctly increase one's power of expression.

## THE PERIODIC AND THE LOOSE SENTENCE

The employment of the periodic sentence is a companion device to the use of balanced structure ; for the balanced sentence is usually a loose sentence, and the two are therefore not often used in combination. In periodic structure, as in the present sentence, until the end is reached the grammatical meaning is not completed. In contrast, a loose sentence is a sentence, like the present one, in which a period can be placed after a completed thought before the end is reached. Every sentence must be included under one or other of these types. In the first paragraph of the present chapter, for example, of the four sentences, two are loose, one is completely, and one is almost completely, periodic. In the fifth paragraph, eight are loose and four periodic. In the case of the shortest sentences, of course, it makes little difference as to which class includes them, for the characteristic of brevity is more important than the type of structure. "I run," "He was fatigued," "Will you kindly pass me the bread?" are periodic. "He came late," "They were overcome with remorse," are loose. When, however, we come to sentences of ten, twelve, or more words, a definite character is lent to them through their construction in loose or periodic form. The normal longer sentence is a loose one, the reason for the fact arising (once more, as in the present instance) from the way in which sentences grow in the mind. More often than not, as one speaks or writes, he does not anticipate to the very end when he begins. Pausing as he goes along, he is apt to add to or modify the original idea after he has started to utter or transcribe it. The consequence is that a medium or long sentence

in periodic form tends to lend the desirable variety which comes from an occasional exception to the general rule.

**Suspense in the periodic sentence.** The particular feature of the periodic sentence, aside from its function as a variant, lies in its power to catch and hold the attention of the reader through the fact that it keeps a logical feature in reserve. When an author writes with reference to Cooper's experience in foreign travel, "Even in Italy, Leghorn with its growing trade, its bales of merchandise, its atmosphere filled with the breath of the salt sea, mixed with the smell of pitch and tar, seemed to Cooper . . . , " the mind has not only consented to go thus far through the expectation of finding what was coming next but by the time it arrives at the verb it becomes in a measure eager to get the suspended remainder, "mean and vulgar." When we read, "The process of achieving greatness can never be agreeable to the looker-on," we are satisfied, at least on grammatical grounds, to stop; but when the sentence reads, "The process of achieving greatness can never be so agreeable to the looker-on," we suffer a certain degree of rhetorical discontent until we get to the concluding comparison, "as the sight of greatness achieved." Compare this statement again with the less satisfactory wording, "The process of achieving greatness may be agreeable to the looker-on, but the sight of greatness achieved is even more agreeable," and one gets sight of a further feature of periodic structure — that it is likely to result not only in an effective suspense of attention, but also in some measure of compression. Effective as this method is, however, a style made up of a majority of, or (if such a thing could be endured) of none but, periodic sentences would be as annoying as is the talk of anyone who is guilty of excessive mannerisms of speech.

**EXERCISE**

Observe the following selections with reference to the use of the balanced sentence and of parallel structure in each. Rewrite one or both, eliminating these features where they occur and introducing them where they are possible but not now employed. Study the two paragraphs again with reference to the degree of parallel structure in each of them. Is there any generalization which can be made with reference to the use of balance and its relation to the use of periodic structure as shown in these paragraphs?

Of the uniformity of political institutions over the whole United States I have spoken already. Everywhere the same system of State governments, everywhere the same municipal governments, and almost uniformly bad or good in proportion to the greater or smaller population of the city, the same party machinery organized on the same methods, "run" by the same wire-pullers, and "workers." In rural local government there are some diversities in the names, areas, and functions of the different bodies, yet differences slight in comparison with the points of likeness. The schools are practically identical in organization, in the subjects taught, in the methods of teaching, though the administration of them is as completely decentralized as can be imagined, even the State commissioner having no right to do more than suggest or report. So it is with the charitable institutions, with the libraries, the lecture-courses, the public amusements. All these are more abundant and better of their kind in the richer and more cultivated parts of the country, generally better in the North Atlantic than in the inland States, and in the West than in the South. But they are the same in type everywhere. It is the same with social habits and usages. There are still some differences between the South and the North; and in the Eastern cities the upper class is more Europeanized in its code of etiquette and its ways of daily life. But even these variations tend to disappear. Eastern customs begin to permeate the West, beginning with the richer families; the South is more like

the North than it was before the war. Travel where you will, you feel that what you have found in one place that you will find in another. The thing which hath been, will be; you can no more escape from it than you can quit the land to live in the sea.—  
JAMES BRYCE, "The American Commonwealth"

But we must stop short in these considerations, which would lead us to boundless lengths. We had something to say on the public moral character of Burns; but this also we must forbear. We are far from regarding him as guilty before the world, as guiltier than the average; nay from doubting that he is less guilty than one of ten thousand. Tried at a tribunal far more rigid than that where the *Plebiscita* of common civic reputations are pronounced, he has seemed to us even there less worthy of blame than of pity and wonder. But the world is habitually unjust in its judgments of such men; unjust on many grounds, of which this one may be stated as the substance: It decides, like a court of law, by dead statutes; and not positively but negatively, less on what is done right, than on what is or is not done wrong. Not the few inches of deflection from the mathematical orbit, which are so easily measured, but the *ratio* of these to the whole diameter, constitutes the real aberration. This orbit may be a planet's, its diameter the breadth of the solar system; or it may be a city hippodrome; nay the circle of a gin-horse, its diameter a score of feet or paces. But the inches of deflection only are measured: and it is assumed that the diameter of the gin-horse, and that of the planet, will yield the same ratio when compared with them! Here lies the root of many a blind, cruel condemnation of Burns, Swifts, Rousseaus, which one never listens to with approval. Granted, the ship comes into harbor with shrouds and tackle damaged; the pilot is blameworthy; he has not been all-wise and all-powerful: but to know *how* blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the Globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs.—  
THOMAS CARLYLE, "Essay on Robert Burns"

**The spineless sentence.** Except for extreme length, it is hardly possible for a sentence actually periodic to be faulty in itself. It is, however, quite possible to write loose sentences

which are indefensible. As one virtue of the periodic sentence inheres in its power to hold the attention to the end without flagging, one vice of the loose sentence may be discovered in its repeated promises of completion and its repeated postponements through the introduction of further modifying ideas. Such a faulty sentence is the following :

His reason is that more garbage and refuse will be thrown into the lake | in accordance as there are more residents | and he is intimately concerned in this fact | for there is a Wisconsin law | which says that no ice can be cut | on a lake | to which summer inhabitants come | in excess of a specified number.

This sentence is unified and coherent but as lacking in emphasis as a chain. Pick it up at any link, and it dangles. It is spineless. There is the difference between a well-built sentence and one which is unduly loose that there is between a bamboo pole and a coachwhip. The defect in the quoted sentence above, and others like it, is that they lack to an extreme degree the quality of periodic structure. Again and again in their course the reader comes to a point at which he might make a full pause. As his drooping attention is spurred to a further progress, he gets into the state of mind of a group of soldiers upon a forced march, who pass through town after town as the end of a day approaches, hoping in vain as each new church spire looms in view that at last a halt will be made for the night. In reading such sentences aloud, one becomes physically wearied from lack of breath, but the mental weariness of being cajoled along from phrase to phrase is no less damaging to the rhetorical effect.

It is evident, thus, that in the sentence as an independent unit, Interest is gained largely through the achievement of emphasis ; and that emphasis, in the sentence as elsewhere, is

secured by paying due heed to proportion and to position. The whole question of balance or of parallel structure is a question of proportion, and the whole secret of the periodic sentence lies in the strategic use of the last few words. The invertebrate sentence is defective on account of its failure to take account of either proportion or position.

**The weakly ended sentence.** In sentences which are loose but not ramblingly long, there is often another sort of ineffectiveness, arising from the presence of a weakly unemphatic little tag. In balanced structure either member of the pair may be put in either side of the scale without affecting the result ; but in a sentence made up of unequal parts, wherever there is an option, the lighter, less important part should come first. Illustrations abound. In the sentence above, the phrase would be less effective if transposed to read "the less important, lighter part . . ." "He sank with relief into the deep enveloping chair" would lose most of its force if the two adjectives were reversed. In a whole sentence the effect is still more unfortunate if an unimpressive member is put into the seats of the mighty. "A great deal depended on whether he would both give a public indorsement to our carefully elaborated plan and assist us as a friend." The mind rebels at being held over a clause of seventeen syllables to be at last rewarded with only six. The two ideas may be of equal importance in reason ; but if they bulk up differently, the bigger one should come later. Further examples follow :

There are also temporary detention homes in which the child awaits the decree of the court instead of in jail.

The purpose is to keep the family together and to pay the mother, who would otherwise have to leave her children during the day to work, to bring up her family.

It is recorded in one of the quaint old convent registers, that the nuns gave the reverend gentlemen presents, usually money, for their services, which was handed them in purses which they bought and kept on hand for the purpose.

This requirement is beyond a doubt as fair as any could be, and democratic.

By industrial education is meant more than manual training, which does very well for the elementary grades, because that is ceasing to answer the requirements made of the high school by the public.

In considering John Woolman's attitude toward slavery as shown in his diary, we cannot help being impressed with the strength of character that this man must have had to maintain his convictions in the face of public opposition—and much opposition he did meet, especially in the South, for he was one of the first avowed abolitionists.

#### THE DEFECT OF WORDINESS IN THE SENTENCE

Finally, before dismissing the subject of sentence Interest, a word should be said about compression in the sentence, although this matter might be considered as coming under the head of diction. No sentence which is overloaded with words that clog its progress achieves the best result in point of emphasis. There are various technical names for different degrees of this offense. But as redundancy, pleonasm, tautology, verbosity, circumlocution, periphrasis, more or less overlap and are used in conflicting ways by different authorities, it is better perhaps to discuss the vices they stand for without using the labels themselves.

**Single words to be stricken out.** Wordiness may arise from the introduction of pairs of words where either of the two would serve. Certain of these couplings (p. 138) have been dignified through traditional usage; so the nouns *food and sustenance*, the verbs *give and bequeath*, the adjectives *proud and haughty*, the adverbs *really and truly*, are justified as

compound words in effect and have the value of the associations which they carry with them. But there are many which cannot be justified on this ground, and these—such as *go and get*, *look and see*, *perfectly all right*, and so on—should be pruned ruthlessly in the course of sentence revision. Equally unnecessary as this pairing of words is the use of the French *c'est . . . que* construction: “There is a man who lives on the next street who has a wonderful library,” “There are many sorts of toadstools which are poisonous.” “There is . . . who” and “there are . . . which” are actually dead weights on the sentences. Overloading, once more, often occurs in narrative and descriptive prose through the eager desire of the writer to lose no opening for an adjective or adverb. A passage thus overstimulated “o'erleaps itself” and loses the very emphasis which is too zealously sought. “The soft brown eyes and furry white nostrils gave a good-tempered expression to his small round head, from which two ragged, pink-lined ears extended.” Less pardonable is the sheer clumsiness which accumulates phrases where words would serve. “He glanced at me in a patronizing way” uses four words at the end to do the work of one adverb.

**Repetitions to be dropped.** A more offensive sort of wordiness arises from a repetition of an idea in such a way as to add nothing to the original statement. Of this type is the often quoted “He returned again to where he started,” and such other expressions as “The pain was intense and he suffered severely,” “I lay awake all night and did not sleep a wink,” “The hall was packed to the doors and there was not a single vacant seat,” “He was completely tired out, and so exhausted he could hardly put one foot before the other.”

**Wordiness needing total revision.** Most offensive of all is the kind of wordiness from which neither single words nor repeated phrases or clauses can be stricken out, but which demands careful rewriting on account, perhaps, of a combination of the foregoing faults and a general lack of economy in arrangement. In one of the early paragraphs of the present chapter, for example, the first draft contained the following passage :

Certain other features of sentence composition are like that of the declarative form in offering seductive but often ineffective chances for variety. One of these is that the usual form of sentence demands the use of the third person unless there is some specific reason for employing the first or the second.

A little examination showed that the following compression was possible :

Another sentence feature, like the declarative form in offering seductive but often ineffective chances for variety, is the prevailing use of the third person. The first or the second should not be employed except for specific reasons.

Through this revision fifty-two words were reduced to thirty-seven, more than one-fourth of the original being sacrificed with a corresponding gain in vigor. The following student revision of a wordy passage was even more striking. First form :

Industrial education must not crowd out or narrow opportunities for liberal education nor must liberal education hinder or disqualify a pupil for practical industrial education. The problem is to make the most effective adjustment possible between industrial and liberal education.

Revised form :

Zeal for industrial or for liberal education must not be so extreme in the lower grades as to disqualify a pupil for either of the types. The problem is to make the two types work hand in hand.

## EXERCISES

Social service is a very broad term and therefore it needs explaining to make it at all clear what is meant by it.

This made it scarce and expensive, so the people of Massachusetts began to foster the sheep-raising industry, with which they were quite successful.

The only fresh air brought into the room is that portion which finds its way through the cracks and crevices or through the open door.

The habits of adults differ from those of children and are often wanting for illustrating just the peculiar virtues of childhood.

When in pupil government a child is unable to realize or understand right from wrong or his duty toward his associates, the officers who have been chosen by the school correct, with the teacher's or principal's knowledge of the form of discipline that is to be used, the one who has committed an offense.

These plants are enormous, glass-inclosed buildings, greatly resembling giant hothouses in their external elevations, and are usually of the steel-frame type of construction.

Complex as are the account books of various organizations to-day, they would probably shed no greater light to future generations upon the workings of these organizations than do the simple account books and registers of the convents of the Middle Ages in acquainting us with the life led inside the monastic walls. Though the system of keeping books was exceeding simple, no detail is missing.

Much information has been gathered from accounts of visitors, especially those who made official visits in order to give reports as to the state of affairs inside the nunneries.

She appointed all the other officers, so that she could put another in the place of anyone who did not fulfill his duties as he should.

Those who were afflicted with some disease or with blindness and those who were crippled sought the shrines in order to be cured of their physical defects.

"Calico" was the term always used in speaking of the old horse of the milkman.

The dog gazes on her mistress with understanding, affectionate brown eyes which look almost human.

The way in which the colt was marked was very unusual.

The question that Darwin attempts to explain is that concerning the origin of species.

The teacher's facial expression soon melted into one which showed that she did not want to find out how much the class knew but wanted to make them interested in their work in order that the class would wish to know more about the subject which was being discussed.

I was also influenced by a friend who had been at the college the year before, and his descriptions of the institution aroused in me a desire to go there too.

Finally I secured work on a farm where it was hard work, I'll admit, but seeing beyond it the possibility of going to college I stayed with it.

She proved herself a true musician by playing a few things by Chopin and McDowell with a feeling which showed her to be truly musical, and being so fond of music myself, this naturally impressed me the most.

Sophie thinks counting superfluous, so after allowing her to play the piece in her own erratic time in which she mixes *allegro*, *andante*, and *presto*, we go back to the beginning and she counts out loud, painfully but correctly.

Whether the ball weakly rolls off the tee or flies straight to fall on the green is not decreed by chance but is determined entirely by the way one hits it.

The building towers above any that I have ever seen in height.

Although the city is quite dissatisfied with its mayor and aldermen, the same ones are elected year after year; and though the commission form of government has been agitated there, it seems no nearer adoption than it has been for years.

After a hasty breakfast I run most of the way in order not to miss a possible car that may be passing.

On Friday, when I think of Saturday as a day of rest, I jot down several things to be done, intending to while away an otherwise interminable day by doing them.

There was a very old man who was fast asleep on a bench and a number of others who looked as though they would like to be.

## SUMMARY

In the development of sentence style, Clearness should first be sought and then Interest. Interest can be achieved through the avoidance of monotony in length and structure of sentences and through the use of well-calculated sentence emphasis. For inexperienced writers certain amateur expedients—such as the use of interrogative and imperative sentences, of the first and second personal pronouns, and of the historical present in narrative—should be regarded with distrust, but adjustment of sentence length and sentence form should be kept in mind, especially during revision, and emphasis should be achieved by means of sparing and discreet use of alliteration, repetition, contrast, and so on. Practice in sparing use of periodic structure should result in the building of well-pointed sentences at the same time that it shows the way to avoid rambling looseness. And wordiness should be hunted out as the foe to final excellence.

## CHAPTER VI

### DICTION

*The individual quality of diction.*

*The limitations of good use.* Present use. National use. Reputable use.  
Slang. Current fashions in diction.

*Barbarisms.*

*Improprieties.* Through confusion of similar forms. Through errors on  
the verge of illiteracy. Through failures to be quite exact.

*The development and enrichment of diction.* Gain in clearness, or accuracy.  
Gain in force, or audacity. Gain in elegance, or range.

### THE INDIVIDUAL QUALITY OF DICTION

Diction, which has to do with the use and selection of words, is the most intimate or personal division in composition. Each individual expresses himself in more ways than he is aware and, even in words, more fully than he may appreciate. A trained observer can determine something of a man's intellectual and social level on the basis of a minute's talk. At the end of a quarter of an hour he can have a fair idea as to certain general points in the character of the man to whose talk he has been listening. It is possible in less time than this to learn of a man's nation, whether English, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, Colonial, or American. He can tell further, if at all versed in the use of English, of the general district from which a man comes. The variations of vocabulary and idiom in the United States between Maine and Florida, California, Kentucky, and Oregon are numerous and fascinating.

Furthermore, through the kind of word used, and particularly through the kind of allusions and figures of speech employed, one can form a safe estimate of a man's business surroundings — whether he moves among people interested in banking, in the selling of goods, in the making of products, or in agriculture. A communicative speaker, without appreciating the fact, within a few moments reveals or betrays his pet interest. The vocabulary of a man interested in literature and the arts is utterly different from that of an ardent sportsman, a "horsey" man, or a baseball fanatic. In the same brief period a man will also display his richness or poverty of imagination; in a word, by a combination of these and other displays of himself he will give a series of indications of the breadth and depth of his individuality.

#### THE LIMITATIONS OF GOOD USE

Within the limits of good use a man may lay himself open in these various ways, and if he is not a scrupulous speaker, he will do this further in his violations of good use. For the choice of words is definitely regulated by what good use, or good form, will sanction, and this good form is almost as arbitrary and even as capricious in its regulation of speech as in its dictates upon dress and social convention. A word which was in good standing a little while ago may be out of date now; what is regular in one English-speaking country may be odd or even incorrect in another; and all usage is subject to the indorsement of those who in discourse are "the best people." In other words, good use puts the stamp of approval only on words which are in present, national, and reputable usage.

**Present use.** Language in its present form is a product of growth and is in a condition of continual healthy change. Until within the last three hundred years, good use set no such broadly acceptable standards as are recognized to-day. The English language, which was still in its youth, recorded in strongly contrasted dialects the competition of the various peoples who combined differently in different localities ; and there was little in the way of popular and permanent record to reconcile the rival dialects or guide them into uniform growth. It was not until one hundred and fifty years after the invention of printing that, with the adoption of the King James version of the English Bible in 1611 and the publication of the Folio edition of Shakespeare in 1623, " the King's English " became something to recognize and acquire.

*Appearance of new words.* The approach toward uniformity, however, did not bring about permanence of speech. New words will always be creeping into the language to meet new needs. Sometimes these additions are more or less picturesque or accidental : as *copperhead* for a Northern non-combatant and prophet of evil during the Civil War ; *mugwump* for a man who hesitated between the Republican and Democratic parties toward the end of the nineteenth century ; or *boycott* and *derrick* for familiar nouns borrowed from the names of their victim or their inventor. Sometimes these acquisitions are logically built up from Greek or Latin root words ; as *telephone*, *telegraph*, *telautograph*, and the like, or the newest vocabulary adapted to aviation. Sometimes they are rather doubtful hybrids ; as *speedometer* or *taxicab*. Sometimes they are frank borrowings from other languages ; as *Zeitgeist*, *ennui*, *garage*. The question about adopting such words into one's own speech and writing is a double one.

There is no virtue in resolutely abstaining from the use of a word simply on grounds of its youth. Such an attitude begets bigotry in religion, old-fogeyism in matters of common thought, and pedantry in the field of letters. If a word is the best word that the language affords for a given idea, it should be employed ; but if, on the other hand, there are good substitutes, so that, though popular, it will probably pass out of use (as in the case of *copperhead* and *mugwump*, which were descriptive of transient ideas), it should be looked on askance. Furthermore, in cases of doubt some of the border-line words may perhaps be admitted into transitory, colloquial speech, even though they are debarred from written discourse, which is more or less permanent. One may easily be too prudish about oral discourse ; it is hardly possible to be too scrupulous about what one commits to writing.

*Loss and change of old words.* In regarding present use, old words must be considered as well as new ones. Two fates have befallen words which have not won a fixed place in the language, and both of them are illustrated in the first line of "The Merchant of Venice" :

In sooth I know not why I am so sad.

Obsolete expressions like *in sooth* have no legitimate place in present-day discourse. It is sometimes unfortunate that they are debarred. As far as their merits go, there is no reason why we should turn against them ; but the fact remains that, though they are perfectly reputable in every sense, they would be out of place in a twentieth-century context. Thus we give over *yon*, though we have no complete equivalent ; we say *called* instead of *y-clept* or *hight* ; we take up *I am glad* and drop *it rejoices me*. There is only one sort of writing in which these or their kind are regularly admitted,

and that is poetry. The so-called license or special privilege extended to the poet does not carry with it the right, as people often assume, to take liberties in the way of inventing or altering words, but only permits him to draw upon the storehouse of the past as well as on that of the present.

The other experience through which words pass in the course of the generations is that of being continued in use, but with a shift of meaning. When Antonio pondered on why he was so *sad*, he was referring to the same state of mind into which the wedding guest fell after the Ancient Mariner had left him *a sadder and a wiser man*. The word meant not only "melancholy," as to-day, but could also mean merely "serious." So also Shakespeare uses *sentence* to mean "thought," *abuse* to mean "deceive," *confuse* to mean "destroy," *he seems to do* to mean "he is on the point of doing." And thus, all along the history of the language, many words have been given successive meanings. There is little danger that the average writer will depart from present use by employing words in obsolete senses. If he does so, it will depend very largely upon his literary tact whether the result will be very effective or so obscure as to fall under the head of that sort of verbal offense which is classed as impropriety. It is always well to have in the background of one's mind the derivative meaning of the words one uses. Such a subconscious knowledge will often lead the writer to nice discriminations which are not too fine for the average reader. When it leads to petty displays of erudition, it emphasizes the demands of present use.

**National use.** The great majority of words are, of course, universally employed wherever English is spoken. There are small groups of words which are peculiar, however,

to whole national divisions of the English-speaking people. It is not profitable here to dwell on the interesting differences of vocabulary between the various widely scattered groups of British subjects. It is enough to note that in common they employ many words and idioms which are not the common terms for Americans. The intelligent American should know these and understand them. He may even care to translate his usual diction into Anglo-English when conversing with Englishmen on their own soil or, if it ever happens, when writing exclusively for them. But for the American at home consciously to use English terms for which he has an equivalent is an amusing affectation as well as a violation of national use.

*Americanisms* versus *Anglicisms*. Occasionally *Anglicisms* have the advantage over the corresponding *Americanisms* in being quite as exact and at the same time briefer; as *lift* for *elevator*, *van* for *wagon*, *motor* for *automobile*. In cases where the American has not a complete equivalent, he may afford to use the briefer word, provided he will be understood. Thus *motor* is gaining ground in America, and we do speak at least of *moving vans*; but few would as yet seriously use the word *lift* as a noun. Sometimes there is no real ground for preference; *baggage* is no better than *luggage*, *druggist* no worse than *chemist*—although *apothecary* is an unwieldier word used only in America. Sometimes, for reasons of derivation, the advantage lies on one hand or the other. The American *store*, for a place where articles are assembled and sold, is probably more exact for modern times than the English *shop*, which suggests that they are manufactured where they are sold. The American *freight* train is a loaded train; the English *goods* train, a

train for merchandise. In general, however, and to a certain degree regardless of the claims of rival words, the matter of national use is decided in advance for the speaker or writer. He addresses the nation of which he is a member; his aim is to make himself understood; and if he really means business, he will use what from the point of view of his own countrymen is a common or garden variety of vocabulary and get along without rare exotics. If he adopts this principle with respect to the English language itself, he will be fairly certain to avoid the error of dragging into his discourse occasional vain displays of the fact that he has a smattering of French or German. The genuine linguist is quite content to limit himself to one language at a time.

*Provincialisms.* National use, moreover, puts the ban on words used only in certain districts and not throughout the nation as a whole. In America to-day, as in the England of Chaucer's day, certain shades of language in various localities have been determined by the character of the first settlers; by the history of these people, of their descendants, and of the new elements in the population; and by the general conditions under which they live and have been living. The resident of New England is keenly aware of the amusing eccentricities of speech in the Californian, but he does not appreciate that he himself is quite as much of a curiosity to the Virginian or Mississippian. Thus, to take a single illustration, the mountaineers of eastern Kentucky, a group descended direct from English seventeenth-century stock, still retain in daily speech words which were current in Elizabethan days but which are unfamiliar now to all but students of history and literature. They still use *pied* for *spotted*, *buss* for *kiss*, *clomb* for the past tense of *climb*, *holp* and *holpen* for the

past tense and the past participle of *help*, and other archaisms less definitely limited to this district. It would be an unnatural and artificial process to eliminate these localisms from the language. Fortunately they are insured by the speech of the unliterary, which is more persistent than the zeal of any linguistic reformer. They lend a happy individual flavor to the speech of the localities in which they endure. Within the limits of those localities such genuine historical survivals should be used in daily speech, and in the literature about these localities, particularly in fiction, they should have their place ; but in writings addressed to the general public they should not appear, for they are not a part of the national vocabulary.

*Pronunciation.* It is difficult to resist the temptation to comment at some length on the matter of the pronunciation of English ; but as that subject is concerned with oral rather than with written discourse, it is perhaps legitimate only to point out in this volume that the same general precepts may be laid down about pronunciation as about the choice of vocabularies : a bad imitation of the English usage is sometimes offensive and sometimes pathetic, but the usage in America should follow the best American speech and should not be ridden by flagrant and unlovely provincialisms. Finally, it should be added that as a nation Americans could improve in speech utterance by emulating in flexibility of vowel sounds and articulation of consonants not only their English cousins but almost any other European nation as well.

**Reputable use.** Of the three sorts of limitations, reputable use is most urgently necessary. In certain respects it takes some degree of schooled ingenuity to offend against present and national propriety ; but any schoolboy may, and all normal

ones do, use more or less diction which is rhetorically disreputable. A word to be reputable must be not only in wide present use but also in the vocabularies of authors who are dignified and substantial as well as popular. Some expressions are being held, as it were, on probation, and while on this sort of waiting list should be used sparingly and with caution. Some are older, but vulgar. These are frequently found in the daily papers and in certain of the popular periodicals. Others are legitimate words used in new senses not by accident but by design. For the time being, such words are in a state of direct contrast to the current word with an obsolete meaning. Finally, a large number of words are ruled out of court not because of any quality in themselves but because they appear in offensive company. Nine tenths of the vocabulary of slang is made up of words which taken singly are in present, national, and reputable use, but which taken together form combinations of questionable propriety.

*Questionable new diction.* Among words which have not become reputable because of their newness may be included many coined derivatives for objects of a scientific nature. These are well illustrated by the many rival words for machines used in throwing moving pictures on the screen. *Biograph*, *cinematograph* (or the English *cinema*), *vitascope*, and others seem to have fought a battle of mutual extinction, until now the simple and exact term *moving-picture machine* is superseding them all. In contrast some words have sprung immediately into reputable use because they stand for something hitherto unknown — a new element, such as *radium*; or a new mechanical device like the *aileron*, which was never thought of before man faced the need of steering a vehicle up and down as well as to right and left.

*Journalistic coined words.* One is tempted to use the word *journalese* (itself not in reputable use) to characterize a growing group of words which are given currency in the newspapers and periodicals. These are somewhat insidious, because in most cases they are modifications or cognates of words in good use — poor relations in respectable families. *Enthuse* is a convenient substitute for *rouse enthusiasm*, but the power of the press has not yet succeeded in getting it into polite society. *Donate*, however, has nothing to justify it, for it is nothing but a clumsy equivalent for *give*. If it has, for the man of sensitive ear, a shade of meaning all its own, — as of the rustic good cheer of a country parish which tenders the parson some of his salary arrears in the shape of pseudo-generous donations at a *sociable*, — this meaning is probably not often what the user of the word intends to convey. An increasing number of verbs are being coined from time to time by the convenient method of adding the suffix *-ize* to adjectives ; thus *commercialize* means "to make commercial," and *carnalize*, "to make carnal." *Magnetize* and *sensitize* (made up of a truncated adjective and the suffix) have probably won their spurs, but no free grant has been given for the extension of this simple process, so that when we come to such new compounds as *socialize*, it is time to think twice before using them. The journalist in his ingenuity very likely contributes in the end to the resources of the language, but he does so after the fashion of the laboratory scientist who attempts a large number of experiments which produce little or nothing in comparison to the few which are rewarded by success and permanent results.

Any impropriety (see pp. 166 ff.) which is reënforced and half sanctioned by more or less general practice must be classified

as a violation of reputable, as well as of present, use. The unsanctioned meaning may at some time become a universal one; it may even at last entirely usurp the word and illustrate once more the law of growth in language. But before this slow process has been carried through, the conservative writer will limit himself to the accepted meanings. Thus *claim* has not as yet become an established synonym for *contend* or *assert*; and *school*, which has various duties to perform already, is not a reputable equivalent for *college*, even though reporters, students, and even now and then a teacher conspire to make it so.

**As to slang.** More offensive than any of these unconscious violations of reputable usage is the adoption of slang, which in its first usage is not only not unconscious but is, as a rule, affected by people who wish to distinguish themselves by the odd originality of their talk. In reality they defeat their own ambition, for so rapid is the speed of slang that the country is swept by it as by a new popular song, with the result that the distinguished man is the one who refrains from the use of a new turn of speech rather than the one who adopts it with headlong enthusiasm.

*Origins of slang.* An odd fact about slang is that, while it is impertinent in its conduct and regardless of propriety in its youth,—and therefore out of the pale of reputable usage,—it nevertheless comes into being quite in accordance with the general laws attending the growth of language. In one province of biology the science of plant breeding has come to be an accepted and valuable field. In linguistics, however, the world moves more slowly, so that as yet we refuse to accept new products created through a combination of artifice and natural law. Many bits of slang, like elemental

language, are imaginative at core and come into being as the result of a desire to indulge in grotesque or amusing metaphors ; these as a rule are drawn from common speech about everyday matters. Many seem to be somewhat spontaneous in their outcropping. Many others, however, may be traced to the "books" of successful light operas, or to popular comedies heard in all parts of the English-speaking world.

These metaphors are frequently drawn from sports and amusements. To *slip one over*, to *catch a man napping*, to *play to the grand stand*, are traceable to baseball, just as to *buck the center* is from football ; so, to *get it across*, to *give them the hook*, are expressions which originated in the legitimate theater and in the vaudeville house. No careful writer uses these now. Yet the most scrupulous of us will speak of *crossing swords in an argument*, *wrestling with a problem*, or *winning the palm*.

Other slang is derived from provincialisms made popular and sometimes national, and later perhaps made reputable. So, *savvy* from the Spanish, *fiasco* from the Italian, *bizarre*, which was once French slang but has always been good English, have all been drawn from provincial usages. Abbreviated words often become slang. Thus, in college the professor, whose class name is instructor, is reduced to *prof* ; the president becomes *prexy*, an examination an *exam*, a quadrangle a *quad*, a fraternity a *frat*, and the University a *varsity* or a *U*. In good usage, but developed in the same fashion, are *fence* from *defense*, *bus* from *omnibus*, *piano* from *pianoforte*, and many others of the same sort. With illustrations so abundant, one may dissent from two of the greatest contemporary authors, who use another biological figure of speech : "Slang is only the rude luxuriance of the

uncared-for soil, knowing not the hand of the gardener." It is not like the rude luxuriance of the self-generated weed, for it is brought into being by an artificial process ; and it does know the hand of the gardener, for if it is allowed to riot without opposition, time does not permit it to spread itself indefinitely but either chokes it off or develops it into a reputable plant.

*The case against slang.* The reasons for not employing slang indiscriminately are simple to state. In the first place, in its newest condition it is not the usual language, but is offensive in its self-conscious newness and in the literary character of the people who first adopt it. If it be of that rare order of slang which cannot be excelled for expressiveness, it will soon pass into good use, and those who are firm and sure-footed in their diction may be the first to adopt it ; but as most slang is like the grass of the field which to-morrow will be cast into the oven, it is the part of wisdom not to use it to-day.

A further reason for rejecting slang is that, although a very small element of it is always likely to graduate into good usage, most of it is a cheap and lazy substitute for really choice diction. A new and popular expression which may at the outset have had a distinctly clear-cut meaning is apt to be used as a counter for all sorts of ideas. On the lips of the schoolboy or schoolgirl, *rotten*, for instance, soon comes to indicate every possible shade of inferiority ; *corking*, every grade of excellence. So that those who should be increasing in school and college their verbal resourcefulness are allowing the most emphatic part of their vocabulary to reduce itself to ten or a dozen stale and flabby words.

*Controlled use of slang.* With reference to slang as used by young people, a clear discrimination may well be made

again between written and spoken discourse. The differences between the two are steadily disappearing. Yet in just this connection, the same people who would be violating the conventions of written discourse by the use of slang would some of them be distinctly abnormal if they never indulged themselves as they spoke. A good test to apply in connection with such speakers is to see whether the schoolboy and schoolgirl use slang when they choose and lay it aside when they should, or whether they have become so addicted to it that they cannot speak reputable English at command. If the latter is true, it is high time for them to take their diction very seriously.

**Current fashions in diction.** Before turning to violations of usage, certain points ought to be made with reference to the fashions in speech of the present day; and it is proper to say *fashions in speech* (see pp. 151, 152), since at the present time the best spoken and written discourse so nearly approximate each other. We are of course too near to the literature of the day to generalize with perfect security about its main characteristics, yet certain tendencies seem to be reasonably clear. There appears to be a general inclination, where a choice is offered, to veer away from the more sonorous Latin derivatives toward the English. Thus, in contrast to our forbears of a hundred years ago,—to illustrate from a page of Fenimore Cooper,—we incline to use *next* instead of *succeeding*, *make* in place of *render*, *enough* instead of *sufficient*, *keep watch* rather than *maintain vigilance*, *welfare* for *comfortable subsistence*, and so on. Another way of saying the same thing is that in general there is a tendency to abandon long words where shorter words will do the work. Again, there is a tendency to use particular words instead of general. The contrast is very marked between the eighteenth century

and now, emphatic between the early nineteenth century and to-day, and recognizable in the continual change of style which has taken place in the last generation. Thus the modern writer avoids the old-fashioned poetical locutions. He would rather write *apple*, *peach*, or *pear* than *the treasures of Pomona*; he rejects *bird* if *robin*, *wren*, or *swallow* is more exact; and he prefers *walk*, *stroll*, or *wander* to the vague act of *proceeding*. Whether it be called a tendency of the present day or simply a characteristic of the best discourse, a third desirable feature is obtained through the at least occasional use of figurative rather than literal words. It is in this connection that a sense of the derivation of words, in cases where the derivation is intelligible and significant, will aid toward effecting clarity and vigor of style. These observations are, however, merely appended here, as further comments on good usage before the shift is made to the matter of offenses against usage.

#### BARBARISMS

It is observed by all instructors in English and by all who are conscious of the use of good and bad English that the majority of gross violations in diction come under the head of impropriety rather than of barbarism — the use of a legitimate word in a wrong sense rather than the use of a word which does not exist in the language. One may dispose of barbarisms, therefore, rather briefly. They find their way into speech and writing through the adoption of new coinages not yet accepted — such as the journalistic words *enthuse* and *donate* already alluded to — or in very many cases through the attempted use of words which the speaker or writer ignorantly mispronounces or misspells. Thus, when a student uses

such expressions as *facilliate* for *facilitate*, *ultumly* for *ultimately*, *deodorate* for *deteriorate*, he is often using at the right place what may be regarded as nothing more than gross misspellings of the words he is after. This sort of violation does not often occur, and when it does occur it is very easily corrected. Another, slightly more difficult to meet, and again a matter which might be regarded as a misspelling, is the use of certain expressions in modified forms. The most common is *alright*—a word which does not exist, although the legitimate *all right* does occur, and is legitimate in student speech in fully one third of the instances where it is used ; yet *alright* has attained some usage through the easy analogy of the adverb *already*, which, in the sense of *by this time*, takes its place in the language side by side with the adjective expression *all ready*, meaning *quite prepared*. Such confusions of speech are very common, and they all point to the perplexing fact that in matters of vocabulary it is never safe to reason solely from derivation, from analogy, or from any other grounds which seem at first sight to be safely logical.

#### IMPROPRIETIES

Far greater complications arise under the head of improprieties than under the head of barbarisms. In their grossest form, these are so incongruous as to be inevitably amusing. Each speech of Mrs. Malaprop, the most famous offender of this sort, is sure to raise a smile :

But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts ; — and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries ; — but

above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not misspell, and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying.—R. B. SHERIDAN, "The Rivals"

Instances such as these need cause little embarrassment to students or instructors of college grade. The difficulties which arise are of a sort that is a shade harder to detect.

**Confusion of similar forms.** One of the most troublesome sources of impropriety is the resemblance in form, of words which have more or less widely different meanings. Carelessness in spelling and pronunciation is very often the reason for confusion of such words. Frequently, though not always, a knowledge of their derivation will help define them. Some of the more common are the following:

*Affect* and *effect*. *Affect* is a verb meaning "to exert an influence upon"; as a noun it is practically obsolete. *Effect* is a verb meaning "to accomplish" or "bring about"; as a noun it means primarily the result of an action.

*Allusion* and *illusion*. *Allusion* means a "reference" to something; *illusion*, a "deception."

*Accept* and *except*. *Accept* is a verb meaning "to receive willingly"; *except*, as a verb, means "to leave out," but it is also a preposition meaning "exclusive of" and an archaic conjunction meaning "unless."

*Beside* and *besides*. *Beside* is a preposition meaning "next to"; *besides*, a preposition meaning "in addition to" and a conjunction meaning "moreover."

*Emigrate* and *immigrate*. The distinction between these two (and their cognates *emigrant*, *immigrant*; *emigration*, *immigration*) depends on an understanding of their prefixes. A laborer *emigrates* from Europe and *immigrates* into

America ; at port of sailing he is an *emigrant* ; at port of landing, an *immigrant*.

*Farther* and *further*. These two, though formerly interchangeable, are now used with a difference : *farther*, to apply to a greater distance ; and *further*, to a greater degree or extent.

*Hanged* and *hung*. *Hanged* is used as the past participle when the verb means "to put to death by hanging" ; *hung* in all other cases.

*Leave* and *let*. *Leave* as a verb should not be used in the sense of *permit*. "Leave me go" is an improbity. The colloquialism "Leave me alone" is correct. The noun *leave* in the sense of *permission* is still in good use.

*Liable* and *likely*. *Liable* in its primary sense carries with it an idea of risk or danger. *Likely* means merely "probable."

*Lie* and *lay*. *Lie* is an intransitive verb ; *lay*, a transitive. A person *lies* down, but *lays* down a book.

He *lay* down, but *laid* down the book.

He has *lain* down, but has *laid* down the book.

*Oral* and *verbal*. *Oral* means "spoken" discourse. *Verbal* means "expressed in words." There is a distinction between oral and written discourse, but both are verbal.

*Rise* and *raise*. *Rise* is intransitive ; *raise*, transitive. The principal parts are *rise*, *rose*, *risen* ; *raise*, *raised*, *raised*.

*Raise* and *rear*. The two transitive verbs, both meaning "to bring up," are strictly differentiated. *Rear* is the finer word, used of children, and sometimes, where great care and skill are demanded, of thoroughbred animals or rare plants. *Raise* is the general word for animals and crops.

*Sit* and *set*. *Sit* is intransitive ; *set*, transitive. The principal parts are *sit*, *sat*, *sat* ; *set*, *set*, *set*.

**Errors on the edge of illiteracy.** Another group of improprieties, almost as often met with, has not the defense that the misused words could be mistaken for others. They are so common among speakers who are quite illiterate that they suggest illiteracy and lack of breeding even when employed by those who have had the chance to achieve rhetorical good manners. Examples of this sort which suggest sheer ignorance are the confusion of the following :

*Between* and *among*. *Between* should be used of two objects. It is therefore equally incorrect to say *between each row*, and *between friends* when more than two are concerned.

*Due to* and *on account of*. *Due to* follows a noun, and *on account of*, a clause.

The loss of the crop was due to the drought.

The crop was lost on account of the drought.

*Like* and *as if*. *Like* is an adjective, *as if* a conjunction. A man may feel *like an athlete* or even *like going for a walk* (which is a noun phrase); but he may not look or feel *like he has been through a cyclone*.

*May* and *can*. *May* is used, of course, to express the right to do a thing; *can*, to denote the ability to do it.

*Party* and *person*. *Party* is not a synonym for *individual*. It means a "group of persons."

Another sort of misuse on the verge of illiteracy is the affectation of slightly pretentious words in connections where simpler ones would be more effective. *Expect* and *presume* are not exact synonyms for *think*. The educated employer *tells* his foreman what to carry out, but too often the foreman, instead of telling his subordinates, climbs onto his high horse and *gives instructions*. There is nothing indecent in possessing *legs* and *going to bed*; it is more vulgar than

refined to talk about *limbs* and *retiring*. It is not a sign of elegance to substitute *morning repast* for *breakfast*, *transpire* (itself an impropriety) for *happen*, or *promenade* for *walk*. *Man* and *woman* are dignified general terms; *lady* and *gentleman* should be used only to mark a distinction.

**Failures to be quite exact.** Such examples as all of these preceding are set down merely as types. It would hardly be possible to make a complete list of improprieties, for the possibilities are endless. Just beyond them in point of literary respectability is a great array of words in good use which do not quite fit their contexts. They are not wrong, but they are not exactly right. They betray the inexactness of those writers who are willing to allow passages which can somehow be interpreted or deciphered to stand in place of passages which cannot be misunderstood.

*Colorless general words.* Such writers will allow themselves continually to use words that will almost represent what they mean. "For example, all exasperations we lump together as 'aggravating,' not considering whether they may not rather be displeasing, annoying, offensive, disgusting, irritating or even maddening, and without observing, too, that in our reckless usage we have burned up a word which might be convenient when we should need to mark some shading of the word 'increase.'"

A very clear index as to the resourcefulness of a speaker or writer is his use of adjectives. To be understood at all, one must possess a fair working knowledge of the names of things; but the lazy will make shift to the end of their days on a very short allowance of the attributes of things. Such speakers will punctuate their talk with *awful* or *horrid*, whatever the shade of disapprobation needed. To balance one

or both of these they will elect *elegant, fine, lovely, nice, or splendid* and use it with complete and perfect indiscrimination. To them every degree of strangeness or oddity is *funny* and everyone who shows feeling — whether of admiration, enthusiasm, or anger — is *mad*.

*Blanks.* A further nonelimination of bad diction results in the use of certain words which may fittingly be called blanks. With a clear context they may be construed to mean almost anything. So the word *thing* may stand for *feature, obstacle, stimulus, danger, source of satisfaction* — about as many things as there are concepts in the human mind. *Thing* is very generally employed as though it were a pronoun, but with no justification in good usage. The word *means* is similarly abused. As a noun, it may be used for *vehicle, instrument, method, system*, and a great number of other words ; as a verb, *to mean* is rather more apt than not to stand for *result in, involve, cause, bring about*, and words of that sort. Similarly, such simple verbs as *get* and *have* are capable of abuse through blanket usages in which the responsibility of exact interpretation is thrown upon the reader.

An omnibus phrase which finds its way particularly into the themes of students who have had some business experience is *along this line*, meaning *of this sort or kind*. It is not a vicious expression in itself if it were used only occasionally and when it had a real function to perform. But it inevitably suggests to the keen reader its ordinary context :

Mr. John Thompson,  
City.

Dear Sir :

Yours of the 18th inst. rec'd and would say in reply that at present we are not carrying any stock along this line, . . .

Chicago, October 21, 1912

There is a very great difference between a suggestive word, in which the writer purposely connotes what he has to say, and one of these *blanks*, in which through sheer shiftlessness he simply fails to be as definite as he should.

*Weak connectives and intensives.* Another form of mild impropriety is the use of ill-chosen conjunctions and weak intensive adverbs. *Then, then too, then again*, are never effective in the sense of *moreover* or *in addition* or *furthermore*; and *certainly, really, awfully, perfectly, honestly, absolutely, simply, surely, entirely, terribly, dreadfully, horribly*, and their confraternity of boneless adverbs are anything but effective words for producing rhetorical emphasis.

*Trite epithets and phrases.* Among faults of speech which are due to the effort to employ good diction, one of the commonest sorts is in the use of trite epithets and phrases. These, when originally used, were probably effective in their picturesqueness, and owe their present failure to serve any good purpose to the fact that they have been worn out by too much handling. Words suffer a depreciation in value with constant use just as, with the exception of the violin, do other tools in either artistic or commercial life. So outworn are certain of these phrases that we smile at them as at people dressed in the costume of a century ago. Few people in their senses would soberly refer to the *briny deep*, the *rosy-fingered dawn*, the *azure sky*, the *dim religious light*, and so on (see pp. 41 ff.). Intelligent people instinctively recoil from such commonplaces, however beautiful the original effect of them may have been. But there are certain other expressions not quite so outworn, which nevertheless have lost their first bright outline and are only received on sufferance. These have to do with common matters of everyday life for which journalism has accepted set

expressions. Ingenuity should seek for substitutes for the *roaring fire*, the *sparkling snow*, the *majestic mountains*, the *conventional black and white*, *in this day and age*, the *dogs of war*, the *golden West*, *were favored with a selection*, a *titanic struggle*, and a hundred other expressions whose luster has been worn off through overmuch handling.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT AND ENRICHMENT OF DICTION

This much about the avoidance of weak and vicious diction is necessary, and this much about the somewhat negative demands of good use. Yet all this is of little value compared with a working scheme for the improvement of a vocabulary which is already tolerable. The stock of words of the average fairly educated person is of two sorts : first, the words which he is accustomed to hearing and can readily understand ; and second, the very small minority of these words that he is accustomed to using. It would be interesting to get some tabulation of figures as to the relationship between these two sets, but even in default of exact data it is perfectly clear that the words with which most men and women have a speaking acquaintance make a poverty-stricken list in comparison with the array of those which they know by ear. The problem is how to improve and increase the store of active words. In the rhetorics of the old school it used to be said that the desirable qualities of style were clearness, force, and elegance. These three virtues were not long ago presented under new names in Professor Palmer's contention that an effective vocabulary should have accuracy, audacity, and range.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In connection with both Clearness and Interest much has already been included in Chapters II, III, and V which would properly be included in a separate and independent treatise on diction. See pages 42-44; 58, 59; 136-138; 145-147.

**Clearness, or accuracy.** With reference to the command of a vigorous and growing vocabulary, the first desirable feature is that it should have clearness, or accuracy. Most speakers and far too many inexperienced writers are content to say something like what they mean. They do not consciously intend to be negligent in their use of words, but as they have found by the experience of years that the intelligent listener can get the drift of their meaning, they have fallen into the habit of saying almost, but not exactly, what they mean. This practice is not wholly the result of carelessness, for they have rightly the feeling that when they are talking they must not continually be pausing for the choice of the correct word. Hence, in order not to commit errors they limit themselves to the few words of which they feel reasonably sure and which slip easily off the tongue. Naturally, when they write, these same words take possession of their pens.

In attempting to grow in accuracy of speech, the first task is to cultivate the avoidance by habit of careless, undistinguished, woolly diction. Practice toward this end will lead toward a use of accurate conjunctions in complex sentences (see pp. 115-117) and the dropping of those colorless general words, blanks, weak connectives and intensives, and trite epithets and phrases already mentioned at length in this chapter (see pp. 170-173). Furthermore, such practice will lead to the abandonment of pet expressions. When a man discovers that he is in the way of using a set form of speech a dozen times a day, he may be sure that he is either thinking in circles or, what is more likely, failing to mark the distinctions of thought that he has in the back of his mind. The business man who says with reference to each new undertaking, "Well, then, the first thing is to get a hold of

Tompkins," is using the language of the wrestler or the police officer to indicate that the first step or move is to interview or get the indorsement or the subscription of Mr. Tompkins. If he is addicted to the repeated use of *perfectly legitimate*, he is likely to mean this sometimes, but more often to use it in place of *quite defensible, wholly reasonable*, and various other shades of mild commendation.

Some people will go on year after year tripping over or circling around old stumblingblocks which they are too lazy to remove. "Bus" is an *abbreviation* of "omnibus"; but it is quite possible for an otherwise intelligent man to come to the edge of a yawning pitfall every time he anticipates the need of the word and to conclude lamely with *compression* or *condensation*, neither of which expresses the idea. At such points as these any intelligent person may very easily by taking thought add a cubit to his vocabulary. It may be said that giving heed in these ways will lead to a self-consciousness that will deprive talking of all freshness and make every sentence a school exercise. Yet no more attention is needed than the average school or college student already pays to matters of dress and deportment or to the adoption of the newest fashion in slang.

A certain rather limited class do fall into a pedantic self-consciousness, which shows itself more in writing than in speech, and which arises from the idea that good written discourse should differ from good speech. In point of accuracy, the sin in this kind of priggishness is that it adopts words for their impressiveness to the ear rather than to the mind and that it substitutes sonorous general terms for exact and specific terms. These are the faults in the diction which Dickens attributed to the grandiloquent Micawber, and George Eliot to the learned Mr. Casaubon in the letters which follow.

## EXERCISE

Rewrite and condense the first, making it as exact and specific as possible. Rewrite the second after contrasting its diction with that in the reply from Dorothea Brooke.

My dear Sir,

Circumstances beyond my individual control have, for a considerable lapse of time, effected a severance of that intimacy which, in the limited opportunities conceded to me in the midst of my professional duties, of contemplating the scenes and events of the past, tinged with the prismatic hues of memory, has ever afforded me, as it ever must continue to afford, gratifying emotions of no common description. This fact, my dear sir, combined with the distinguished elevation to which your talents have raised you, deters me from presuming to aspire to the liberty of addressing the companion of my youth, by the familiar appellation of Copperfield! It is sufficient to know that the name to which I do myself the honor to refer, will ever be treasured among the muniments of our house (I allude to the archives connected with our former lodgers, preserved by Mrs. Micawber), with sentiments of personal esteem amounting to affection.

It is not for one situated, through his original errors and a fortuitous combination of unpropitious events, as is the foundered Bark (if he may be allowed to assume so maritime a denomination), who now takes up the pen to address you — it is not, I repeat, for one so circumstanced, to adopt the language of compliment, or of congratulation. That he leaves to abler and to purer hands.

If your more important avocations should admit of your ever tracing these imperfect characters thus far — which may be, or may not be, as circumstances arise — you will naturally inquire by what object am I influenced, then, in inditing the present missive? Allow me to say that I fully defer to the reasonable character of that inquiry, and proceed to develop it: premising that it is *not* an object of a pecuniary nature.

Without more directly referring to any latent ability that may possibly exist on my part, of wielding the thunderbolt, or directing the devouring and avenging flame in any quarter, I may be

permitted to observe, in passing, that my brightest visions are forever dispelled — that my peace is shattered and my power of enjoyment destroyed — that my heart is no longer in the right place — and that I no more walk erect before my fellow-man. The canker is in the flower. The cup is bitter to the brim. The worm is at his work, and will soon dispose of his victim. The sooner the better. But I will not digress.

Placed in a mental position of peculiar painfulness, beyond the assuaging reach even of Mrs. Micawber's influence, though exercised in the tripartite character of woman, wife, and mother, it is my intention to fly from myself for a short period, and devote a respite of eight-and-forty hours to revisiting some metropolitan scenes of past enjoyment. Among other havens of domestic tranquillity and peace of mind, my feet will naturally tend towards the King's Bench Prison. In stating that I shall be (D. V.) on the outside of the south wall of that place of incarceration on civil process, the day after to-morrow, at seven in the evening, precisely, my object in this epistolary communication is accomplished.

I do not feel warranted in soliciting my former friend Mr. Copperfield or my former friend Mr. Thomas Traddles of the Inner Temple, if that gentleman is still existent and forthcoming, to descend to meet me, and renew (so far as may be) our past relations of the olden time. I confine myself to throwing out the observation, that, at the hour and place I have indicated, may be found such ruined vestiges as yet

Remain,  
Of  
A  
Fallen Tower,

Wilkins Micawber

P. S. It may be advisable to superadd to the above, the statement that Mrs. Micawber is *not* in confidential possession of my intentions — CHARLES DICKENS, "David Copperfield," chap. xlix.

My dear Miss Brooke, —

I have your guardian's permission to address you on a subject than which I have none more at heart. I am not, I trust, mistaken in the recognition of some deeper correspondence than that of date

in the fact that a consciousness of need in my own life had arisen contemporaneously with the possibility of my becoming acquainted with you. For in the first hour of meeting you, I had an impression of your eminent and perhaps exclusive fitness to supply that need (connected, I may say, with such activity of the affections as even the preoccupation of a work too special to be abdicated could not uninterruptedly dissimulate); and each succeeding opportunity for observation has given the impression and added depth by convincing me more emphatically of that fitness which I had preconceived, and thus evoking more decisively those affections to which I have but now referred. Our conversations have, I think, made sufficiently clear to you the tenor of my life and purposes: a tenor unsuited, I am aware, to the commoner order of minds. But I have discerned in you an elevation of thought and a capability of devotedness, which I had hitherto not conceived to be compatible either with the early bloom of youth or with those graces of sex which may be said at once to win and to confer distinction when combined, as they notably are in you, with the mental qualities above indicated. It was, I confess, beyond my hope to meet with this rare combination of elements both solid and attractive, adapted to supply aid in graver labors and to cast a charm over vacant hours; and but for the event of my introduction to you (which, let me again say, I trust not to be superficially coincident with foreshadowing needs, but providentially related thereto as stages toward completion of a life's plan), I should presumably have gone on to the last without any attempt to lighten my solitariness by a matrimonial union.

Such, my dear Miss Brooke, is the accurate statement of my feelings; and I rely on your kind indulgence in venturing now to ask you how far your own are of a nature to confirm my happy presentiment. To be accepted by you as your husband and the earthly guardian of your welfare, I should regard as the highest of providential gifts. In return I can at least offer you an affection hitherto unwasted, and the faithful consecration of a life which, however short of the sequel, has no backward pages whereon, if you choose to turn to them, you will find records such as might justly cause you either bitterness or shame. I wait the expression of your sentiments with an anxiety which it would be the part of

wisdom (were it possible) to divert by a more arduous labor than usual. But in this order of experience I am still young, and in looking forward to an unfavorable possibility I cannot but feel that resignation to solitude will be more difficult after the temporary illumination of hope.

In any case, I shall remain,

Yours with sincere devotion,

Edward Casaubon

My dear Mr. Casaubon, —

I am very grateful to you for loving me, and thinking me worthy to be your wife. I can look forward to no better happiness than that which would be one with yours. If I said more, it would only be the same thing written out at greater length, for I cannot now dwell on any other thought than that I may be through life,

Yours devotedly,

Dorothea Brooke

— GEORGE ELIOT, "Middlemarch," chap. v

**Force, or audacity.** After accuracy comes audacity, which contributes to force. In the interest of conversation, particularly among intimates, it is natural to use slang, because of the vigor of the imagery and the general freshness of flavor which characterizes it. Similarly, there is a temptation to strike off now and then a new figure of speech or to conjoin two words not ordinarily put together. All too often the impulse to speak with originality is stifled, and the chance to make what is very likely an old observation in a new and fresh way is lost. The average speaker is almost as timid in the use of his own language as he is in the use of a new language; there are few students who do not appreciate the embarrassment of wanting to speak French or German to a master of the tongue but not quite daring to attempt it.

The dangers in connection with audacity of speech are again twofold. On the one hand, there is the temptation

to be clever. Few things are more offensive than the consciously clever person who gives the impression of having thought up new things and having waited for a chance to shoot them off. This habit of mind in its studied deliberation is as far from boldness in word usage as anything could be. On the other hand, the timid originality which apologizes for itself is almost equally ineffective. A speaker can easily spoil a good comparison or epithet by interpolating *as it were, so to speak, as one might say, if I may be permitted the figure*, and so on. Any page of what we call effective writing is likely to have several illustrations of bold diction in its course.

#### **EXERCISE**

Study the following passages from Stevenson and Thoreau. Select the words in these which are particularly characterized by boldness of choice. Are they also accurate? Select other words or phrases which are commendably accurate but not audacious. Attempt the rewriting of passages, to see whether you can paraphrase them with equal clearness and force. What parts of speech lend most distinction to these passages?

Thoreau's thin, penetrating, big-nosed face, even in a bad wood-cut, conveys some hint of the limitations of his mind and character. With his almost acid sharpness of insight, with his almost animal dexterity in act, there went none of that large, unconscious geniality of the world's heroes. He was not easy, not ample, not urbane, not even kind; his enjoyment was hardly smiling, or the smile was not broad enough to be convincing; he had no waste lands nor kitchen-midden in his nature, but was all improved and sharpened to a point. "He was bred to no profession," says Emerson; "he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the State; he ate no flesh, he drank no wine, he never knew the use of tobacco; and, though a naturalist, he used neither trap nor gun. When asked at dinner what dish he

preferred, he answered, 'the nearest.' " So many negative superities begin to smack a little of the prig. From his later works he was in the habit of cutting out the humorous passages, under the impression that they were beneath the dignity of his moral muse; and there we see the prig stand public and confessed. . . .

He was no ascetic, rather an Epicurean of the nobler sort; and he had this one great merit, that he succeeded so far as to be happy. "I love my fate to the core and rind," he wrote once; and even while he lay dying, here is what he dictated (for it seems he was already too feeble to control the pen): "You ask particularly after my health. I *suppose* that I have not many months to live, but of course know nothing about it. I may say that I am enjoying existence as much as ever, and regret nothing." It is not given to all to bear so clear a testimony to the sweetness of their fate, nor to any great courage and wisdom; for this world in itself is but a painful and uneasy place of residence, and lasting happiness, at least to the self-conscious, comes only from within. Now Thoreau's content and ecstasy in living was, we may say, like a plant that he had watered and tended with womanish solicitude; for there is apt to be something unmanly, something almost dastardly, in a life that does not move with dash and freedom, and that fears the bracing contact of the world. In one word, Thoreau was a skulker. He did not wish virtue to go out of him among his fellowmen, but slunk into a corner to hoard it for himself. He left all for the sake of certain virtuous self-indulgences. It is true that his tastes were noble; that his ruling passion was to keep himself unspotted from the world; and that his luxuries were all of the same healthy order as cold tubs and early rising. But a man may be both coldly cruel in the pursuit of goodness, and morbid even in the pursuit of health. — ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, "Henry David Thoreau"

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a

hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get our sleepers and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am

glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again.— HENRY D. THOREAU, "Walden, or Life in the Woods"

**Elegance, or range.** Finally, a vigorous and growing vocabulary will have variety. A man who speaks well seldom goes long without acquiring new words. He does not regard it as a virtue to dodge innovations in speech, such as come with the introduction of new scientific terms, nor does he consider it amusing, as a lazy speaker does, to garble words with which he is unfamiliar by feebly mouthing at them and admitting with a half smile that he does not know how to pronounce them or use them. It must be acknowledged that it is difficult to use words with which one has been acquainted only by ear, but it is difficult to do any new thing—to speak to a new acquaintance on the same block, whom one has passed in silence for years; to trade at a new shop; or to call an old acquaintance "Doctor" when he has passed his medical examinations.

The acquisition of new words which can make a vocabulary accurate, bold, and broad cannot be done in haste. *It is hardly a task that can be achieved as a task at all.* It must rather be the result of a habit of mind in which the speaker or writer accustoms himself to acknowledging usages better than his own. If he cultivates the habit of using, say, two words a week with which he has not been familiar, holding to these and adding others, he will in the course of a year — of a college year, let us say — have added fifty to seventy-five new words. Such an increase as this is no mean achievement, and such a habit once begun leads to more and more rapid increase in this sort of earnings.

## CHAPTER VII

### LETTER WRITING

*Literary aspects of the social letter.* The place of letters in literature. The partial decline of letter writing.

*Four cardinal qualities in the social letter.* Letters should be informal. Letters should be personal. Letters should be definite. Letters should be suggestive.

*Conventions of letter writing.* The informal letter. The business letter. The formal letter.

Many students seem to feel that when writing letters they are free to ignore all the basic principles of composition. Some write as infrequently and as briefly as they can, and others, who are free enough with their pens, apparently assume that their ideas may be heaped up on paper in happy disregard of form. Yet in this universal and very personal kind of writing there is every need for care in word selection and sentence formation and ample room for care or neglect in paragraphing and general planning. As, however, letter writing is usually considered to be free from — or above — rule and precept, a chapter on the subject is specially pertinent even though its main points are treated separately and at greater length in connection with the more formal types of composition. Furthermore, there are many very definite usages, or conventions, of letter writing which are as distinctly matters of etiquette as good manners at the table or in the classroom. These will be summarized at the end of the chapter.

## LITERARY ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL LETTER

**The place of letters in literature.** The mere bulk of the letters which have a place in permanent literature is proof enough of the dignity of this kind of composition at its best. Poets, essayists, and novelists, as well as great numbers of men and women without literary aspirations, have all contributed their quota. As long as a hundred and fifty years ago, letters of well-known people were published so commonly in England that Dr. Johnson declared in protest, "It is now become so much the fashion to publish letters that in order to avoid it I put as little as possible into mine." Even at that the Doctor did not altogether escape; and since the issuing of the letters of Chesterfield and Walpole in his day, hardly a year has passed without some important addition to this department of literature. Moreover, since James Boswell wrote his famous life of Dr. Johnson letters have more and more been quoted in extended biographies; and since Richardson and Smollett used make-believe letters in such stories as "Clarissa Harlowe" and "Humphrey Clinker" the epistolary form of novel has never gone out of use. The personal letter has no small place in literature.

**The partial decline of letter writing.** Yet the saying is common to-day that letter writing is a declining art. People seldom write the old-fashioned, leisurely letters either for private reading or in the hope of future publication. There is less reason than there used to be for doing so. The daily papers distribute news so quickly and fully that gossipy information by letter, of the sort which swells the correspondence of Horace Walpole to nine large volumes, would be out of date by the time it was delivered. In the weekly and

monthly magazines thinking people discuss current events and live problems ; and unthinking people can be more thoughtless than ever, now that they can get their minds made up for them at a subscription of so much per month. Again, the perfecting of the postal system during the last century has wrought a great change. A hundred years ago it took so long and cost so much to send a letter that it seemed worth while to put some time and thought into writing it. Now the quickness and the cheapness of the post seem to justify the feeling that a brief letter to-day may be followed by another next week — a "line" now by another to-morrow. Yet though the long letter may be less common than it used to be, people will always be writing letters of some length, and the qualities of a good letter, whether long or short, are the same.

#### FOUR CARDINAL QUALITIES IN THE SOCIAL LETTER

**Letters should be informal.** First of all, a good social letter is always reasonably informal. It is not an essay ; it need have no one central topic ; it need move to no single conclusion. A good letter may ramble somewhat if it stops short of being disjointed and incoherent. It is more like good conversation than a lecture or oration. It may be informal in having shorter paragraphs than other forms of composition ; it should be informal in the character of its sentences, for long sentences and much use of balanced and periodic structure are as out of place in friendly correspondence as they are in ordinary dialogue. It should enjoy a certain freedom in the choice of words ; between friends, colloquial language and even now and then a touch of slang is permissible. The problem for the letter writer is to make his writing approach

his talk. Trouble arises, however, from the fact that talk is natural for everyone and writing for only the few. The tradition is in favor of the simplest, most unadorned English in daily speech, but for most people a perverted tradition favors a somewhat complicated and ornate written discourse. Yet the best letter writers have always written simply.

When Charles Lamb writes to Coleridge: "Have you made it up with Southey yet? Surely one of you two must have been a very silly fellow, and the other not much better, to fall out like boarding-school misses," he reminds us not so much of the author of the *Essays of Elia* as of that simple-hearted friend whose gentle talk made him beloved by most of the great English men of letters of his day. On the other hand, Thackeray's confidential report apropos of his lecture tour in America, "I find I have a much bigger voice than I knew of, and am not afraid of anybody," is not altogether different from his narrative style, for the reason that in reading his books one always has a half feeling of being let into a bit of news not intended for the general public. Although the latest eminent critic says with truth, in general, "Browning's prose was in any case the most roundabout affair in the world," yet in a letter Browning can refer to a country vacation as "another term of delightful weeks, each tipped with a sweet starry Sunday at the little church" and can protest that "Without death, which is our church-yardy, crape-like word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of that which we call life." Emerson writes to Carlyle, "I hasten to send the letter, before any steamer from Liverpool can bring me any growl of wrath from my dear old lion. Stifle the roar, and let me do penance by appointing me to negotiations . . . with P. S. and Co. and the printers."

And in the same vein, the poet Thomas Moore wrote to Washington Irving :

Sloperton Cottage, January 31, 1831

My dear Irving:

I don't like to bother a great diplomat such as you are about matters of the shop — particularly as you won't come and be bothered here where I could have my wicked will of you — but time flies, and the golden moment (or rather silver one) for the arrival of my dollars from America ought to be here. Do, like a good fellow, poke them up a little about it, as, if the cash does n't come, I must — go.

I would (but for the same dislike of pestering, etc.) have asked you to send out my sheets of Lord Edward for me — but sufficient to the day are the dollars thereof, and if you but get me these three hundred and thirty-three pounds sterling out of the fire, I shall give you a dinner when I come next to town, at the Literary Union, and have Tom Campbell (who is now my particular friend) to meet you. . . .

God bless you, my dear Washington. Mrs. Moore, who pines for you, sends her best regards with those of,

Ever yours,

Thomas Moore

Read again, in contrast to the foregoing, the letters ascribed to Mr. Micawber and Mr. Casaubon, on pages 176-179.

**Letters should be personal.** The friendly letter should also be personal in quality and in contents. Naturally the first and second persons should be used as freely as they would be in conversation between friends. Naturally, too, the subject matter is personally interesting to writer and reader. But even when the subject — as may often be the case — is of general as well as personal interest, it may be described or discussed in simple and personal terms. Natural scenery, public buildings, great men, and notable events may all be made interesting

by means of allusion to things that are near home and familiar. Thus John Adams wrote to his wife :

I met Mr. Francis Hopkinson, late a mandamus councillor of New Jersey, now a member of the Continental Congress, who, it seems, is a native of Philadelphia . . . . He is one of your pretty, little, curious, ingenious men. His head is not bigger than a large apple, less than our friend Pemberton, or Doctor Simon Tufts. I have not met with anything in natural history more amusing and entertaining than his personal appearance, — yet he is genteel and well bred, and is very social.

Thus Longfellow wrote of himself when a professor at Harvard :

I could live very happily here if I could chain myself down to college duties and be nothing but a professor. I should then have work enough and recreation enough. But I am too restless for this. What should I be at fifty? A fat mill-horse, grinding round with blinkers on . . . . This will not do. It is too much for one's daily bread when one can live on so little.

Note the homely personal details in this slightly abridged letter from Shelley to his friend Thomas Love Peacock :

I received your last letter just as I was setting off from the Bagni on a visit to Lord Byron at this place. . . . Lord Byron is in excellent cue both of health and spirits. He has got rid of all those melancholy and degrading habits which he indulged in at Venice. . . . He has written three more cantos of "Don Juan." I have yet only heard the fifth, and I think that every word of it is pregnant of immortality. I have not seen his late plays, except "Marino Faliero," which is very well, but not so transcendently fine as the "Don Juan." Lord Byron gets up at *two*. I get up, quite contrary to my usual custom, but one must sleep or die, like Southey's sea-snake in "Kehama," at *12*. After breakfast we sit talking till six. From six till eight we gallop through the pine forests which divide Ravenna from the sea; we then come home and dine, and sit up gossiping till six in the morning. I don't suppose this will kill me

in a week or fortnight, but I shall not try it longer. Lord B.'s establishment consists, besides servants, of ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon; and all these, except the horses, walk around the house, which every now and then resounds with their unarbitrated quarrels, as if they were the masters of it. Lord B. thinks you wrote a pamphlet signed "John Bull"; he says he knew it by the style resembling "Melin-court," of which he is a great admirer. I read it, and assured him that it could not possibly be yours. I write nothing, and probably shall write no more. It offends me to see my name classed among those who have no name. If I cannot be something better, I had rather be nothing, and the accursed cause of the downfall to which I dedicate what powers I may have had—flourishes like a cedar and covers England with its boughs. My motive was never the infirm desire of fame; and if I should continue an author, I feel that I should desire it. This cup is justly given to one only of an age; indeed, participation would make it worthless: and unfortunate they who seek it and find it not.

I congratulate you—I hope I ought to do so—on your expected stranger. He is introduced into a rough world. My regards to Hogg, and Coulson if you see him.

Ever most faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

After I have sealed my letter, I find that my enumeration of the animals in this Circean Palace was defective, and that in a material point. I have just met on the grand staircase five peacocks, two guinea hens, and an Egyptian crane. I wonder who all these animals were before they were changed into these shapes.—"The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley." (Roger Ingpen, editor.)

**Letters should be definite.** A good letter is always definitely circumstantial. A letter containing simply news is tantalizing if it stops with saying that for the last fortnight the writer has been enjoying himself greatly or that he finds college life very interesting. What friends and relatives want to know are the details. Has he got his enjoyment indoors or out, alone or with friends, in work or in recreation? When,

where, and how? Does he find college life interesting because he is in full sympathy with it or because it seems oddly amusing? Is he chiefly interested in study or in so-called college activities? Without these circumstantial details a letter degenerates into hardly more than a note, and an unsatisfactory one at that. A letter on a more general topic should be governed by the same principle. A decision as to what a man believes or what policy he plans to follow becomes interesting only in the steps that have led up to it. A piece of admonition or advice is likely to fall on deaf ears unless it is supported by illustrations. See how Lord Chesterfield counsels his son to acquire the social graces:

There is a man whose moral character, deep learning and superior parts I acknowledge, admire and respect; but whom it is so impossible for me to love, that I am almost in a fever whenever I am in his company. His figure (without being deformed) seems made to disgrace or ridicule the common structure of the human body. His legs and arms are never in the position which, according to the situation of his body, they ought to be in; but constantly employed in committing acts of hostility upon the graces. He throws anywhere, but down his throat, whatever he means to drink, and only mangles whatever he means to carve. Inattentive to all the regards of social life, he mistimes or misplaces everything. He disputes with heat, and indiscriminately; mindless of the rank, character and situation of those with whom he disputes; absolutely ignorant of the several gradations of familiarity or respect, he is exactly the same to his superiors, his equals and his inferiors; and therefore by a necessary consequence absurd to two of the three. Is it possible to love such a man? No. The utmost I can do for him is to consider him as a respectable Hottentot.

**Letters should be suggestive.** Finally, a good letter should be suggestive. A letter which is informal, personal, and definite is very likely to be clear and interesting. But it will be even more clear and interesting if it is also suggestive. This

quality is secured by wise resort to comparison, contrast, simile, and metaphor, coupled with pertinent reference and allusion. As it is treated at length in an earlier chapter (see pp. 57-64), it will be sufficient here to present one illustration in a letter by James Russell Lowell :<sup>1</sup>

## TO MISS NORTON

Madison, Wisconsin, April 9, 1855

... Though I have been in such dreadfully low spirits since I left home that I have not seen much to write about, yet I like to keep my promises, and as I have had one *very* pleasant adventure, I will try to make a letter of it. I will premise generally that I hate this business of lecturing. To be received at a bad inn by a solemn committee, in a room with a stove that smokes but not exhilarates, to have three cold fish-tails laid in your hand to shake, to be carried to a cold lecture-room, to read a cold lecture to a cold audience, to be carried back to your smoke-side, paid, and the three fish-tails again — well, it is not delightful exactly. On the whole, I was so desperate that, after a week of it, I wrote out hither to be let off — but they would not, and so here I am. I shall go home with six hundred dollars in my pocket, and one of those insects so common in Italy and Egypt in my ear. Sometimes, though, one has very pleasant times, and one gets *tremendous* puffs in the local papers.

But . . . I have a nice little oasis to talk about — so I will to that. I arrived, then, at Baggs's Hotel, in Utica, which (the hotel) has a railroad running *through* it — so you may fancy how pleasant it is — to dinner, and it occurred to me that it was Saturday, that I was only twelve miles from Trenton Falls, and that I had no engagement till Monday evening. To the Falls, then, I would go and spend the Sunday. Mr. Baggs assured me that it was in vain ; that Mr. Moore, at Trenton, would not "take anybody in" (so he dubiously phrased it) in winter ; and that I should have my cold drive for my pains. I had travelled enough not to take anything for granted, — so I hired a "cutter" and a pair of horses and a huge

<sup>1</sup> See also the letter by Washington Irving quoted on pp. 66, 67.

buffalo-skin coat to drive, and set out. It was snowy and blowy and cold, and part of the way the snow was level with the backs of the horses (Bison-skin had prophesied it, but I did not believe till I saw) — think of it, on the 24th March! One good remark came out of the bison-skin on the way. A clumsy driver nearly ran into us, upon which Bison-skin, with some preliminary observations which I omit, told his brother Jehu that "he did n't know no more 'n a last year's jackass!" Imagine the state of mind of an *immature* animal of that species! . . .

Here I was broken off short — and have not had a moment since; I am now at the Burnet House, Cincinnati, and it is Friday, the 12th April. I go on.

In the morning Mr. Moore took me out and showed me the best points of view, after which he considerably left me. It was a cold morning, and the spray, as it rose, crystallized in feathers, as fine as those of a moth, on the shrubs and trees and sides of the gorge. For a few moments the sun shone and lighted up all these delicate ice-fern, which, in texture, were like those star-shaped flakes that fall from very cold clouds. Afterwards I saw Niagara, but he is a coarser artist, and had plastered all the trees with ice like alabaster. He is a clumsy fellow compared with Cuyahoga. The ice-work along the rocks at Trenton is very lovely. Sometimes it hangs lightly, honeycombed by the sun and bent by the wind from the fall as it froze — looking like the Venetian-lace drapery of an altar. At other times it has frozen in filtering stalactites precisely like organ-pipes. . . .

The letters which have found their way into literature are almost all social and informal, as the foregoing illustrations will show. And these illustrations, although presented to exemplify each a different characteristic, show to a second glance how good letters usually combine most or all of these traits. A distinction should be made, however, between this dominant literary type and two other sorts — the business letter and the formal letter. This distinction is maintained by certain conventions of letter writing.

**EXERCISE**

Analyze in detail the illustrative selections quoted from Moore, Adams, Longfellow, Shelley, Chesterfield, and Lowell, picking out the elements which make them informal, personal, definite, and suggestive. Rewrite them in terms which are formal, impersonal, abstract, and wholly literal, and note how they are reduced in length and deprived of interest.

Write paragraphs on similar subjects which might appropriately go into your own letters to parents or friends. Select the material from recent experiences related to your fellow students.

**CONVENTIONS OF LETTER WRITING**

**The informal letter.** *Desirable qualities in an informal letter.* The first part of the chapter was devoted at length to the informal letter. It was said that it should be personal, concrete, and suggestive. As certain dangers beset the path of informality, three cautions may be set down here.

1. An informal letter should avoid the appearance of having been "dashed off." There is a real difference between being hurried and seeming hurried. If time is limited, a letter may be written briefly; but the least that courtesy may confer is order, clearness, legibility, and at any rate the appearance of leisure.

2. An informal letter should be characterized by restraint. There is this inevitable difference between written and spoken discourse — that what has been committed to paper is in a way more final than what has been merely uttered. It is well to write spontaneously, but it is well, too, to remember that what is being written now will be read to-morrow or next week or may even survive for months or years. This thought will be

likely to induce restraint in diction, in allusion, in sweeping generalization, and in personal criticism. It will subject even the informal letter to the conventions of letter writing.

3. It is a fixed convention of informal social letters that they should be written with pen and ink. The friendly, personal attitude which belongs to the informal letter cannot be maintained if the typewriter or stenographer intervene between the two people in correspondence. To use these aids in such letters is to run the risk of giving offense by suggesting that the writer is too hurried or too indifferent to write letters by hand. Only a special emergency can justify making an exception to this rule, and such emergency should be mentioned by way of apology for the breach of custom.

*Conventions at beginning and end of an informal letter.*

1. The place and date may either precede the letter at the right margin, or, better, the date may precede and the place follow the letter at the left margin. Unless there cannot possibly be any doubt as to location, the place of writing should not be omitted. The date should always be recorded.

FIRST FORM

123 Chestnut Street  
Portland, Maine  
October 8, 1914

SECOND FORM

October 8, 1914

---

123 Chestnut Street  
Portland, Maine

2. More often than not, the address of the person to whom the letter is directed is not set down in letters of this sort.

If inserted, it should be at the left, after the letter, in which case place and date of writing should precede the letter at the right.

Mr. Daniel E. Francis  
456 Wood Street  
Bristol, Vermont

3. The opening phrase is necessarily personal and informal, for it strikes a keynote in its way. "In the increasing degrees of familiarity, good taste and common sense will dictate the form of salutation." The awkward and rather rustic use of *Dear Friend* or *Dear friend John* should be avoided, and titles (with the exception of *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, and *Dr.*) should be written without abbreviation.

4. With the closing, as with the opening, phrase, wide variation is possible in denoting the various degrees of cordial intimacy. As a rule the less extravagant expressions are likely to mean more than the most effusive ones. *Very truly*, *Very sincerely*, *Very cordially*, are both moderate and significant. *Yours, etc.*, is discourteous because of its hint of careless indifference.

5. In signing, the use of the full name is somewhat more friendly than the use of initials and the last name. Only with intimates should the first name alone or simple initials be signed.

August 25, 1914

Dear Mr. Francis:

Precautionary rulings against war correspondents have delayed my departure. But now I see light ahead and am making every effort to sail on the *Olympic* September second. L—— finds more news for the moment on this side, and it looks very doubtful whether he will decide to go as soon as I do, but at some opening we may unite forces and do field work together.

I hope you are making use of my canoe. Would that I could join you. The tropical heat, combined with the efforts I have been making this week to learn the A B C's of military tactics, has decided me to take a little water trip, and incidentally to pay my respects to your friend Mr. B—— at P——. Perhaps Ernest and I may have a day of fishing together at S——.

In spare hours I have been writing all manner of stuff: description of the country along the Franco-German border, discussions of the relative strength of the fortifications and the sentiments of the people, in an attempt to find out how I can write. Some were accepted, most *not*. My literary self-esteem has been battered black and blue, but with the instructive criticism the editors have given me perhaps I can make something out of myself in the future, though at present I doubt it.

Remember me, please, very cordially to Mrs. Francis.

Very sincerely,  
Albert

Hotel Blank  
789 Fifth Avenue  
New York City

#### EXERCISE

Write one or more informal social letters on subjects selected from the following list or on others of a similar nature.

A plan for a vacation trip with a friend.

A letter accompanying the return of a book, giving your impressions of it.

A proposal to go together to see a well-known actor in a particular play.

An account of an interesting convention, concert, lecture, athletic event, or dance.

A description of your college and its surroundings.

A characterization of your classmates as a group.

First impressions on seeing or meeting an eminent person.

Advice to elect or avoid a certain study on the basis of your own experience with it.

Personal comment on a recent event of national importance.

**The business letter.** *Desirable qualities in a business letter.* 1. A business letter should be clear and direct. The business matter involved should be definitely stated, so that nothing is left to the imagination with reference to date, place, amount and sort of material, kind of service desired, price, fee, or other essential detail. This exactness should be observed not only in a letter opening a transaction but also in the following exchange of letters. It is safer to repeat a little than to rely on the memory of past correspondence which itself may have been vague or ambiguous.

2. Nevertheless, a business letter should be brief. Repetition does not always result in added length. It is actually briefer to write *at a fee of \$100* than to write *at the fee mentioned in your letter of September 17*. The reading of a business letter should demand close attention, but it should demand as little time as possible. Though repetition from previous letters may be desirable, there should be no repetition within the limits of the letter itself.

3. Finally, a business letter should be dignified and self-respecting. It should not include curt abbreviations: *yours rec'd, the 15th inst., the 22d ult., contents noted, can meet you Oct. 4, 10 A.M.* It should not include hackneyed expressions: *trusting to hear from you by return mail, same will receive prompt attention, we have nothing along this line, thanking you in advance.* It should not include slangy, jocular, or familiar expressions. Attention secured at such a cost is dearly bought.

*Conventions at beginning and end of a business letter.*

1. Unless the address of the writer is printed as a letterhead, it should be written in full, with the date, in the upper right-hand corner of the first page.

2. The business name of the person or firm to whom the letter is directed should be written in full below the date line, at the left, above the body of the letter.
3. The opening phrase to an individual is *Dear Sir* or *Dear Madam*; to a firm, *Gentlemen* or *Dear Sirs*.

123 Chestnut Street  
Portland, Maine  
October 8, 1914

D. E. Francis and Co.  
456 Wood Street  
Bristol, Vermont  
Gentlemen:

4. The closing phrase in modern practice is much less elaborate and formal than used to be the case. The best phrases are *Yours truly*, *Yours very truly*, *Yours sincerely*, or, when appropriate, *Yours respectfully*.

5. The signature should be written on a line below the closing phrase, ending near the right-hand margin. A woman should indicate in parenthesis the form in which she should be addressed, placing before her name (*Miss*) or (*Mrs.*) or under it her husband's Christian name, (*Mrs. Albert B.*).

123 Chestnut Street  
Portland, Maine  
September 19, 1914

Mr. Daniel E. Francis  
456 Wood Street  
Bristol, Vermont  
Dear Mr. Francis:

Your letter of September 16 to Mr. Chase finds him still in Europe. If he were here, I am sure he would be very glad to see you when you come. Will you not please call upon me either at the office or by telephone (Oxford 271) if there is anything I can do for you during his absence.

The matter of Dr. Sudekum's visit to this country I presume is necessarily in abeyance until some settlement of the present situation has been made, as Mr. Chase has written me nothing definite concerning him.

Very truly yours,  
G. H. Irving,  
Secretary to Albert B. Chase

#### **EXERCISE**

Write one or more business letters on subjects selected from the following list or on others of a similar nature.

A request to the proper college authorities to be allowed to substitute a specified course for some other required course.

A request to the proper college authorities to be allowed to take more or less than the average number of courses in a given quarter or semester.

A request to an employer to be granted a leave of absence for a specified period.

An order to a business house for a list of goods with prices, date, manner of delivery, and other necessary information.

A letter calling attention to an error in a bill.

A letter to an attorney, requesting legal service in a specified case.

A letter to a professional man, accompanying payment of a bill and making a courteous acknowledgment of the service rendered.

**The formal letter.** Formal letters include letters to persons of eminence with whom the writer has not a close personal acquaintance, and invitations, acceptances, and declinations written in the third person.

*Desirable qualities in a formal letter.* In addition to brevity and dignity, the special quality desirable in a formal letter is conventional correctness. In no formal letter is there any place for personal expression. Custom demands that they be written in severely simple and literal phrasing.

*Conventions at beginning and end of a formal letter.*

1. In formal business letters — such as those which request an interview, inclose an introduction, recommend an appointment, or indorse a petition — place, date, and designation of the person addressed should be similar to that of other business letters. In formal social letters the place and date are entered after the close, toward the left margin, instead of before the opening phrase, at the right.
2. For persons holding high office, there are numerous forms of opening phrase established by custom. In default of these, which are not absolutely necessary, respect can be shown by the use of *My dear Sir*, *My dear Madam*, or *Gentlemen*.
3. The most appropriate closing phrase for formal business letters is *Respectfully yours*, although the other phrases suggested for business letters are sometimes not out of place. For formal social letters, *Very truly yours* and *Very sincerely yours* are conventionally correct.
4. The signature should be written as in the business letter.

123 Chestnut Street  
Portland, Maine  
October 8, 1914

Mr. Daniel E. Francis  
456 Wood Street  
Bristol, Vermont

My dear Sir:

I take pleasure in sending you this letter of introduction for my friend George H. Irving. I hope you will be able to spare a few minutes to talk with him about the interesting problem on which he wishes to have the benefit of your advice.

Yours respectfully,  
Albert E. Chase

NOTE. In a formal social letter the date may be placed as in this example and the address of the writer below the letter at the left.

The formal invitation, acceptance, or declination is written in the third person, omitting address of the person to whom it is directed as well as opening and closing phrases and signature and entering the date and the address of the writer at the close.

Mrs. Albert B. Chase requests the pleasure of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel E. Francis' company at dinner on Thursday evening, October the twenty-second, at half past seven.

123 Chestnut Street  
October the eighth  
Nineteen hundred fourteen

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel E. Francis accept with pleasure Mrs. Chase's invitation to dinner on October twenty-second at half past seven.

456 Wood Street  
October the twelfth  
Nineteen hundred fourteen

## PART II. THE FORMS OF DISCOURSE

### CHAPTER VIII

#### **EXPOSITION.**

*The forms of discourse contrasted—the two pairs.* Contrast between scientific and literary. Contrast in motive. Contrast in approach to the reader. Contrast in material employed. Contrast in order of details.

*Exposition defined.* Formal exposition. Two expository forms to avoid as practice work.

*Constructive processes—Clearness.* Determining the point of the exposition. Preliminary definition of terms. Dividing the subject.

*Development of the outline—Interest.* The double task of exposition. The need of resourcefulness. The danger of cleverness. Writing for special classes of readers.

The principles laid down in the first half of the book have been presented without detailed reference to the various forms of discourse, although, on account of its value as a practice form, exposition has been used almost entirely for illustration. Nevertheless, the matters thus far discussed are of equal importance to all the forms—exposition, argumentation, description, and narration; and until the first principles have been reasonably mastered, no writer is justified in pursuing special studies in these forms.

Of course it would be unreasonable to assume of any student starting work in the forms of discourse that he had a perfect and final hold of the elements of composition. The

avoidance of error in all but one sentence in ten thousand is something that the educated writer can count upon, but the wielding of the sentence in such a fashion as to achieve the best grace and finest fluency and the highest degree of interest is high art and far beyond the reach of any instruction. The assumption, therefore, which is made as the student turns from a study of the elements of discourse to practice in the forms of discourse, is that he has progressed far enough in the elements to approach the forms with a reasonable feeling for structure and a sense for Clearness and Interest in the composition, paragraph, sentence, and word.

#### THE FORMS OF DISCOURSE CONTRASTED—THE TWO PAIRS

It may help slightly, before discussion of each of the forms is undertaken, to treat of them for a moment as a quartet. It is evident at a glance that the four forms separate themselves into two pairs—exposition and argument on the one hand and narrative and description on the other; and it takes hardly more than a glance to see that there are certain prevailing differences between the pairs. A moment's thought, too, will bring to light what is true of almost all classifications and generalizations in the field of art—that here as elsewhere no absolute dividing lines can be drawn, and that in speaking of the four forms of discourse as different one from the other it must be recognized that they are not mutually exclusive. The features which make them what they are, are perhaps features which are found in all four, but which are found with different measures of emphasis, so that each in turn may be distinguished through its predominant characteristic.

**Scientific *versus* literary.** Thus, to deal first with the pairs, exposition and argument are more frequently employed in what may be called scientific literature, and narration and description in what may be called pure literature. This sweeping statement should be applied with caution. It is not intended to imply that all exposition is of the type of Darwin's "Ascent of Man" or Locke's "Human Understanding," or that all narration is of the same sort as "Romeo and Juliet" or "The Ring and the Book" or "Diana of the Crossways." Using the term *scientific* in a rather loose sense which the scientist himself might object to, it may be said that much expository material which deserves to be called literature has yet the element of *scientia*, or knowledge, in it to a degree which makes the generalization a fair one. Of this sort, for instance, are such nonscientific works (in the limited sense) as Arnold's "Culture and Anarchy," Ruskin's "Stones of Venice," Carlyle's "Past and Présent," and scores of other classics.

**Contrast in motive.** It may be said therefore, that as between the two pairs in the quartet, exposition and argument are devised more especially to inform or instruct, in distinction from narration and description, whose chief mission is to please or edify. Here again the objection must be met that much narration and even description has its instructive aim; that Dickens was consciously wielding an influence for reform through expounding conditions in the law courts, in the schools, in jails, and in the nonconformist churches; and that he has given the benefit of his knowledge to the English people in order to bring about changes in the social order. It must be conceded that story-telling was so used long before Dickens's day and is still so used in both play and novel.

It may be added in passing that the majority of stories that have assumed the burden of instructing and reforming have impaired themselves as stories. Yet it must also be added that brilliant exceptions have proved the unwisdom of any generalization which debars the instructive element from narrative literature. Exposition and argument, however, more generally instruct and reform than do the other pair.

**Contrast in approach to reader.** As a natural accompaniment to these other differences, the more scientific forms of discourse approach the reader through a different channel from the more literary. Exposition and argument appeal preëminently to the intellect; narration and description, preëminently to the feelings and the imagination. The reader who should approach the "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius or the "Discourses" of Epictetus with emotional enthusiasm would get little out of them — hardly more than would the coldly analytical reader who attempted to arrive at the sum and substance of "Oliver Twist" or "The Cloister and the Hearth" without entering at all into the spirit of the authors and more particularly of the characters. It will appear in the detailed devices for arousing Interest in exposition that the appeal to the imagination may be made with great effect, and that without such appeal the highest success is hardly possible. Conceding that there are all shades of combination in the interplay of intellect and feeling in the various forms of discourse, the generalization laid down here is entirely safe for comparative purposes.

**Contrast in material employed.** Again it may be said, and this time with less need of qualification, that exposition and argument have as their basic material the rather general and abstract conception, and that description and narration

have as their basic material the concrete and definite. Mrs. Gaskell writing her inimitable "Cranford," Jane Austen relating the chronicles of "Mansfield Park," George Eliot in "Middlemarch" — each presents certain definite characters, specific events, and concrete complications; the characteristic experiences of certain types of towns. Each story proceeds from the specific to the general. The reader who either from inertia or obtuseness fails to see anything beyond the specific story will still be rewarded for his reading. Exposition dealing with these three towns would have worked by just the opposite method. It would have taken special topics — "Cranford was Gossip-Ridden," "Regard for Family naturally dominated Mansfield Park," "The Progress of Science was sadly obstructed in Middlemarch" — and would have developed each one of these general concepts in terms of the conditions of the time, the circumstances which prevailed in each of the communities, and typical instances to develop the general points. The procedure would have been, as always in exposition, from the general truth to the specific detail.

**Contrast in order of details.** Once more it may be said of exposition and of argument that the order of details in these forms is determined by the order of reason, and that the order in narration and description is primarily the order of time. Here again caution is necessary. In a well-told story, the event which precedes must have a causal relation to the event which follows; a mere casual string of details marshaled into a rough sequence is by no means certain to make a good story. But, on the other hand, it is generally true that the chronological order is actually undesirable in expository and argumentative material, because it is highly likely to interfere with the order of reason which should dominate.

## EXPOSITION DEFINED

**Formal exposition.** Out of these discriminations it is now reasonable to define exposition. It is a form of discourse the purpose of which is to inform or instruct, directed toward the intellectual powers of the reader, dealing with general truths developed by the use of the concrete, and regulated in the arrangement of its details by the order of reason. The amount of literature included under this definition is vast, varied, and if one were to contemplate reading it all, formidable. For the purposes of the theme writer, it is perhaps well to put into the background, if not altogether to exclude, two types which often tempt him away from the paths of what is strictly exposition.

**Two expository forms to avoid as practice work.** One of these is the light essay. This type of literature has many of the external characteristics of all exposition, yet in general has certain vital departures from it. Lamb's "Dissertation on Roast Pig," for instance, or his "Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," or his "Christ's Hospital Thirty Years Ago," are in no case written to give information, but rather to please; none of them moves from the general to the particular but quite in the reverse order; none of them appeals to the intellect so much as to the imagination. Like attractive sheep in most undetectable wolves' clothing, they pick their way over the literary mead. Yet the reason for advising the inexperienced writer not to attempt the light essay is not because it does not meet an exacting definition, but for the more substantial reason that it is supremely difficult to write well. It demands the same complex double task as do such an allegory as "Pilgrim's Progress," and such a satire as "Gulliver."

Both of these are satisfactory, or in their day have been satisfactory, to the boy or girl for the external story, and at the same time are stimulating and uplifting to the adult mind on account of their secondary or inner meaning. So the light essay, as a rule, if it really justifies itself, is in a pleasant external form which itself is a delight, and at the same time embodies a secondary wisdom, a knowledge of human nature and a broad application of some sort, which is its vital expository characteristic. The average freshman or sophomore is incapable of writing a good light essay, if for no other reason, because he is not old enough. It is only kindness to warn him against a task in which he is almost foredoomed to failure.

The other type of doubtful expository value for the student is the autobiographical sketch (see p. 325). This, as a rule, is very easy to construct, however difficult it may be to develop. It is the kind of form in which the elementary student, working in the elements of composition, may well cast his material, but it has its deficiencies for the student who ought to be getting the discipline which work in real exposition can afford. Any student writing about early experiences of his own is in a measure, of course, purveying information. He is telling other people what they do not know except as he tells them; but in the definition of exposition has been included the statement that this form of discourse deals with relatively abstract material. The autobiographical sketch, dealing for the most part in merely personal material, "Hunting in the Adirondacks," "Fishing for Tarpon in Florida," "Handling a Newspaper Route in Cleveland," is not apt to have in it material of genuine expository value. It is likely to be interesting because it comes from the heart and because

it is almost certain to be concrete, but it is very unlikely to afford the writer any real training in arranging and presenting his material. This training is after all what the genuine student of composition needs and is eager to get.

#### CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESSES — CLEARNESS

**Determining the point of the exposition.** Previous to the writing of any piece of exposition, the first step is, of course, to determine upon the point or the conclusion. Enough concerning this has already been said in the chapter upon the Whole Composition (pp. 25-27).

**Preliminary definition of terms.** Next, before the writing of the whole theme is undertaken, there must follow in many an exposition the work of defining such terms as need definition. As exposition deals with relatively general subject matter, and as it is the very essence of general or abstract terms that they are open to various interpretations, it is indispensable that the reader and writer agree at the outset on a common understanding. In certain instances, where the composition is to be upon matters of fact, a term or terms may be disposed of with the simplest of dictionary definitions. So, in a theme upon the manufacture of steel, the following paragraph amply suffices :

"Steel is a variety of iron distinguished for its degree of hardness, which possesses the fusible property of cast iron and the malleability of wrought iron." As the proportion of carbon in steel increases, the metal becomes cast iron, being hard and brittle; but with diminishing proportions of carbon, it assumes more and more of the softness, toughness and malleability of wrought iron. The steels of the first type are known as "high" and those of the latter as "low" or "mild."

*Definition of concrete matters of fact.* Sometimes, again, a definition is needed for the purpose of arriving at a common limitation of a subject, in order that as the writer progresses the reader shall not vainly expect information which is not to be forthcoming. Sometimes, as in the cases of the use of terms familiar to a locality but not elsewhere understood, definition is as necessary as the formal introduction of strangers by the repetition of their names to each other. The lack of such definition is apparent, even though it is partly attempted in the following paragraph, in which the term under discussion seems to stand for a transportation company, for the route which it follows, and for the accommodations for rest supplied along the way.

#### THE WYLIE WAY

The tourists through the Yellowstone National Park are blessed,—or cursed,—by having at their disposal several transportation companies. When a tourist drops off a train at Livingston, Montana, he is immediately beset by the representatives of one and all of the companies. There are in the Park ten companies operating. One of these,—perhaps most prominent,—is the magnificent "Hotel Route." Then comes the more distinctive and unique Wylie Way, that of permanent camp, followed by the other "portable campers."

*Definition of abstract matters of interpretation.* Yet these, however, are relatively simple compared with the type of exposition which deals with abstract material. Here is an essay, for instance, by Josiah Royce upon "Provincialism."<sup>1</sup> At the outset, the author points out that *provincialism* is to be used in an elastic sense, and after two pages he has developed that the term applies "both to the social habits of a

<sup>1</sup> Josiah Royce, *Race Questions and Other American Problems*. The Macmillan Company.

given region and to the mental interest which inspires and maintains these habits," but before he completes his task he appreciates that the word *province* must also be agreed upon. This, after showing the various uses of the word, he agrees shall mean "any one part of a national domain which is sufficiently unified . . . to possess a sense of its distinction from other parts of the country." Now as a result of his two processes of definition, he determines *provincialism* to mean

first, the tendency of such a province to possess its own customs and ideals; secondly, the totality of these customs and ideals themselves; and thirdly, the love and pride which leads the inhabitants of a province to cherish as their own these traditions, beliefs, and aspirations.

Thus, in all cases where there is the slightest danger of misunderstanding, early information should be given as to the exact meaning of any vague term to be used. In exposition, which deals preëminently with ideas, it is emphatically important that the writer arrive at what might be called a working agreement with his reader as to the use of terms. The essay once finished, the reader may return to any definition which he chooses. While the given subject is under discussion, if the doubtful terms have been well defined, the opportunities of misunderstanding between reader and writer have been very greatly reduced. A very common and a somewhat humiliating experience among otherwise intelligent men is for them to disagree with spirit, and perhaps with heat, because while they think they are arguing on opposite sides of a question, they are really only talking at odds as a result of using the same words to denote quite different ideas. The time to dispel all chances for such confusion is at the very outset of any expository composition.

*Extended definitions.* Not infrequently in a treatise, a serious essay, a book chapter, and elsewhere the opening portion, even up to a thousand words or more, is in itself a short composition, wholly given to defining either the core of the idea which is to follow or some term necessary to its discussion. A statement of the nature and characteristics of a chemical element, a species of animal or plant life, or even of an invention may be at once a definition and an independent short essay. Of abstract terms there is continual need of redefinition. The more popular one becomes and the more it is consequently misused the more likely is there to be some profit in a sober discussion of what it means. The college student may well pause and consider such expressions within his own province as *college spirit, amateur sport, scholarship, student honor, sportsmanship*; or if he enjoys a sympathetic interest in the world of his father, such terms as *democracy, progress, the unearned increment, socialism*, and dozens of others which more often than not are used in careless or slovenly ways. The demands for all definition, whether long or short, are that it shall be limited to the term in hand, complete with reference to it, simple enough to be intelligible, and full enough to be clear. For extended definitions the processes of development are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

#### EXERCISE

Observe each of the following definitions — of *cultivated man, vulgar optimism, and sentiment*. Note how each definition excludes what is not contained in the term, and then mentions its general and its special characteristics. Note also the use of comparison and contrast, the dominance of literal language and the occasional effectiveness of figurative.

I ought to say at once that I propose to use the term "cultivated man" in only its good sense—Emerson's sense. In this paper, he is not to be a weak, critical, fastidious creature, vain of a little exclusive information or of an uncommon knack in Latin verse or mathematical logic: he is to be a man of quick perceptions, broad sympathies, and wide affinities; responsive but independent; self-reliant but deferential; loving truth and candor, but also moderation and proportion; courageous but gentle; not finished, but perfecting. All authorities agree that true culture is not exclusive, sectarian, or partisan, but the very opposite; that it is not to be attained in solitude, but in society; and that the best atmosphere for culture is that of a school, university, academy, or church, where many pursue together the ideals of truth, righteousness, and love.—CHARLES WILLIAM ELIOT, "Present College Questions"

First, however, let it be said frankly that there is a foundation for the charge against Dickens which is implied in the phrase about vulgar optimism. It does not concern itself with Dickens's confidence in the value of existence and the intrinsic victory of virtue; that is not optimism but religion. It is not concerned with his habit of making bright occasions bright, and happy stories happy; that is not optimism, but literature. Nor is it concerned even with his peculiar genius for the description of an almost bloated joviality; that is not optimism, it is simply Dickens. With all these higher variations of optimism I deal elsewhere. But over and above all these there is a real sense in which Dickens laid himself open to the accusation of vulgar optimism, and I desire to put the admission of this first, before the discussion that follows. Dickens did have a disposition to make his characters at all costs happy, or, to speak more strictly, he had a disposition to make them comfortable rather than happy. He had a sort of literary hospitality; he too often treated his characters as if they were his guests. From a host is always expected, and always ought to be expected as long as human civilization is healthy, a strictly physical benevolence, if you will, a kind of coarse benevolence. Food and fire and such things should always be the symbols of the man entertaining men; because they are the things which all men beyond question have in common. But something more than this is needed

from the man who is imagining and making men, the artist, the man who is not receiving men, but rather sending them forth. —  
G. K. CHESTERTON, "Charles Dickens: A Critical Study"

The word "sentiment" is employed in a considerable variety of senses; but in connection with literature and art it has a fairly definite meaning. It is used for the milder range of emotions, for emotion associated with thought and evoked by ideas, as opposed to passion and to emotion more directly dependent on sensation. It constantly appears in connection with the adjective "tender"; and is the mainstay of the pathetic. So frequent is this association that sentiment is at times almost identified with the feeling of compassion; but such feelings as friendship, the love of home and country, the sense of honor, a kindly attitude toward the lower animals, with the other emotions generally called "humanitarian," — all of these, when they do not exist with such intensity as to be called passion, are all included in sentiment. As an element in character the sentiments play a very important part; for, though they are not likely to be involved in the great crises of existence, they are in daily exercise, and are largely the causes of the prevailing tone of our ordinary life. The factors, for example, which are usually considered in the awarding of the title of "gentleman" belong chiefly to the class of what used to be called "fine feelings" or sentiments.

In literature, the effect of sentiment is something analogous. It does not make or unmake poetry, but it may be chiefly responsible for its flavor and charm. A poem like "The Cotter's Saturday Night" has gained its great popularity mainly by the diffusion throughout it of those sentiments with which the ordinary man most readily sympathizes: the feeling of domesticity; the attraction of fireside and children at the end of the day's work; the mild reciprocal inclination of the man to the maid and the maid to the man, love in the stage when it may be still impeded by bashfulness; the family exercise of religion, here affecting the reader through old association rather than conviction; and, finally, the emotion of patriotism. While the great masterpieces deal with lofty passions, supreme crises, and heroic types, the function of sentiment, both in life and in literature, is the enrichment of the commonplace; and this, not by the larger exercise of imagination

that discerns in it the universal, but by a humbler process of rousing tender feelings of sympathy and association. The abundance of this quality, along with a fine command of simple rhythms, is the main cause of the wide popular appeal of such a poet as Longfellow. — W. A. NEILSON, "Essentials of Poetry"

**Dividing the subject.** The point determined on, the title in all probability adopted, the definition as far as necessary attended to, the remaining preliminary task is to determine on the divisions of the body or development. As shown in an earlier chapter (Chapter II), the points which are eligible for discussion do not, as a rule, occur to the mind either in the order of importance or in the order of reason. They come sometimes reluctantly, drawn in by conscious processes, or sometimes come tumbling in on one another according to odd associations which it would frequently be very difficult to analyze. The writer who will devote himself to the task can, however, accumulate in a relatively few minutes a list of twenty or thirty jottings on any subject which he is acquainted with through reading or experience.

This method, of course, is not a highly scientific one. It is suggested as a practical plan for utilizing the average processes of the average student's mind rather than as an ideal scheme, which only an extremely small minority of students could follow, and which a small minority of this minority would follow even if they could. The task of division or partition of a subject is to arrange a reasonable or logical succession of steps, and to do this in such a fashion that when the successive divisions are expanded they will deal with the same general subject, avoid repetition or duplication of treatment, follow in due sequence, and arrive with emphasis at some legitimate conclusion.

*Chronological divisions.* The simplest kind of exposition concerns itself with material which, when logically presented, is also presented in the order of time. The danger in planning and discussing subject matter in this fashion is that the writer will forget—and forget to make properly clear—the logic of events which for the moment makes a time order the reasonable order. The fact that a considerable number of details follow in consequence of each other is a happy accident; the real task of the writer is not to tell a story, but to group and expound his data in the clearest possible way. The following subjects may be so treated :

- Potato Farming
- Mobilizing an Army
- The Making of Concrete
- Ginning and Baling Cotton
- The Progress of the Peace Movement
- Legislation Preliminary to the Drainage Canal

*Enumeration of groups or classes.* A slightly more difficult type of exposition concerns itself with matter-of-fact sub-topics which can be set off into separate groups. A large proportion of cyclopedia articles are thus developed. Relatively simple as presentation of this type is, the unskillful writer may entangle himself in unsystematic method until his efforts result in an obscure and fragmentary treatment. Such a calamity can be avoided if he contrives to arrange his material in groups and divisions which are mutually exclusive, and to adopt some general classification in which each of his divisions has a rightful place. To discuss, for instance, the undergraduates of a college in terms of men, foreigners, and students under twenty would, of course, be a patent absurdity. The ordinary partition of the students

should employ a classification which can reasonably be subdivided, such as *student characteristics*, *main interests*, *geographical distribution*, or other broad categories. If the exposition is of a locality, it would naturally deal with leading features, classifying these again in some reasonable and consistent way. The merit of such classifications is easily tested by the briefest of critical examinations. The chief matter to remember with them is that with any group of facts the varieties of approach are myriad, and the choice of treatment must depend upon the idea which is to be developed. Professor William James in concluding one of the chapters in his "Principles of Psychology" testifies to this general truth in his closing paragraph.

This is all I have to say about the emotions. If one should seek each particular one of them of which the human heart is the seat, it is plain that the limit to their number would lie in the introspective vocabulary of the seeker, each race of men having found names for some shade of feeling which other races have left undiscriminated. If then we should seek to break the emotions, thus enumerated, into groups, according to their affinities, it is again plain that *all sorts of groupings would be possible, and that all groupings would be equally real and true. The only question would be, does this grouping or that suit our purpose best?* The reader may then class the emotions as he will, as sad or joyous, sthenic or asthenic, natural or acquired, inspired by animate or inanimate things, formal or material, sensuous or ideal, direct or reflective, egoistic or nonegoistic, retrospective, prospective or immediate, organismally or environmentally initiated, or what more besides. All these are divisions which have been actually proposed. Each of them has its merits, and each one brings together some emotions which the others keep apart. — WILLIAM JAMES, "The Principles of Psychology"

*Discussing the reasons of things.* With exposition which again is based upon fact but deals with the interpretation of

it rather than with its mere presentation, the method of procedure is similar. As will be seen from the next chapter, the steps in this type of exposition are on the border line of argument, though the result is not argument, for the conclusion is in no sense debatable. Suppose, for instance, in a given university there is no adequate physical laboratory. The fact is apparent at a glance, but the honest inquirer might wish to be informed as to the need of one. The arrangement of topics here is not a matter of classification of objects, although no less clearly a classification of ideas. It is not so patently easy as it is to put into proper groupings a thousand students or the characteristics of Alaskan climate, for there is no similar surrounding line to the outskirts of the topic. Illustrations of this kind of discussion will include such topics as "The Value of Industrial Education to the Elementary School" or "Good Drama as a Bad Business Proposition." Here there are, relatively speaking, no things to classify and no time order to follow, yet the task is an expository one based upon logical relationships not determined by these more obvious factors.

*Division a means to an end.* In making these distinctions it would be a mistake to assume that all expository subject matter can be set off into water-tight compartments. A few elementary types are practically certain to be subject to one and only one method. Exposition of a process, for example, is almost inevitably chronological. On the other hand, a treatise on the consonants is sure to deal with aspirates, liquids, mutes, and so on. But a very large proportion of subjects may be approached in turn from various angles. "Residence Districts in Boston," for instance, might be expounded in terms of successive periods, or of different

localities, or of various characteristics ; and a treatment which deferred to the time element in choosing successive epochs as main divisions would be very likely to analyze each in turn into subdivisions of locality or of characteristics. Thus in the following preliminary draft of an outline the main headings are all time divisions, and the subheadings all deal with the parts of the town which became important in turn. These methods of approach, then, are useful only as the student really apprehends them and uses them. If he attempts to surrender slavishly to them he will achieve little. They are instruments and not ends in themselves.

#### RESIDENCE DISTRICTS IN BOSTON

- I. Early colonial days
  1. Between Washington Street and the water front
  2. On the river side
- II. From the days of the Mathers to the Revolution
  1. Beginnings of Beacon Hill
  2. Extension westward
- III. From the Revolution to the Civil War
  1. Development of the Back Bay
  2. Decline of Beacon Hill
  3. Growth of the slums
- IV. Since the War
  1. Rapid transit and the suburbs
    - a. Effect of the boulevards
    - b. Effect of the electric-car lines

#### EXERCISES

1. Examine the following list of subjects and indicate with reference to each one whether it is the sort which lends itself to enumerating by classes, to chronological treatment, or to interpretative treatment.

2. Suggest representative headings under the various topics.
3. Again indicate such topics as may be treated in two or even three different ways according to the method of approach.
4. Once more indicate such topics as demand the simpler enumerative or chronological division into main headings but demand further the interpretative treatment of these headings under the various topics.

The Process of preparing Cocoa for the Market  
The Chinese Drama  
The Growth of the Woman Suffrage Movement  
The Stages in a Child's Play with Objects  
The Atomic Hypothesis  
Student Activities on the Campus  
Development of the Modern University  
American Writers of the Past Century  
The Teaching of Cooking in the Lower Grammar Grades  
Man and Machinery  
The Military Uses of Air Craft  
The Five Great Species of Literature  
The Organization of a New High School  
Rival Merits of Portland and Seattle  
The Canadian Election of September, 1911  
Intimacy of Ocean Travel  
Characteristics of the Australian  
Events leading to the War of 1914  
The Necessity of Fighting Tuberculosis  
"The Tempest" as an Allegory  
The University Undergraduate Council  
Women in Business  
Mourning in Different Nations  
Fortifications on the Franco-German Border  
Why I like American History  
The "World in Chicago" Movement  
The Direct Election of Senators  
Study of Greek Architecture  
The Value of Moving-Picture Shows

5. Examine the following topics with brief suggestions for subdivision. Analyze, and point out the defects in the subdivisions as proposed.

The Value of Student Government

1. Different types of students
2. Help to the student
3. Honor
4. Coöperation

The Work at Hull House

1. The work for civic betterment
  - a. Schools, libraries, religious meetings
2. The education of the people
  - a. Trades for men, women, and children

The Immigrants

1. Group according to countries
2. Conditions which led to coming
3. What those from the different countries do here

Science of Cooking

1. How to cook layer cakes
2. How to cook meats
3. How to make ices, frappés, etc.

Public Playgrounds

1. Their organization
2. The beneficial results
3. The cost of maintaining them

*The logical order of divisions.* The order of the main divisions in the development of a theme (when they do not fall in the order of time) is often quite as vitally important as the selection of them. The selection has to do with theme unity, and the order of their presentation with both coherence and emphasis. The first natural step toward establishing the coherent order is suggested by the first precept in connection with coherence — that ideas which are connected

in thought should be kept together and ideas which are disconnected in thought should be kept apart. To apply this principle to a set of five or six or seven headings is very likely to show that they themselves are reducible to two or three groups, and that certainly the members of these groups should not be separated from one another. A further glance may show that, as between these three groups, one of them should inevitably stand between the other two. Finally the principle of emphasis should show whether, as they stand, they should be developed in the order of 1, 2, 3 or whether it would be better for purposes of final emphasis and for introductory appeal to work them out in full in the order 3, 2, 1.

#### **EXERCISE**

Examine the following defective outlines. Do they provide for effective endings, which in such outlines might well be entitled Conclusions? Is desirable definition provided for? Are there eight coördinate topics in each, as indicated by the numbering and lettering, or might these eight be reassembled in more general groups? Do the divisions stand at present in logical order? Are the subdivisions well worded and sufficient in number to contribute to the clearness of the outline? Correct the two outlines on the basis of the criticisms you have just made.

#### **THE MAKING OF BREAD**

- I. Objects of bread making
- II. Definitions of various stages of bread making
  1. The ferment
  2. The sponge
  3. The dough

- III. Various methods of bread making
  - 1. Offhand doughs
  - 2. Ferment and dough
  - 3. Sponge and dough
  - 4. Ferment, sponge, and dough
- IV. Fermentation of bread
- V. Sour bread
- VI. Faults in bread
  - 1. Holes
  - 2. Working with unsound and low-grade flour
  - 3. Use of alum, copper-sulphate, and lime
- VII. Methods of aerating bread other than by yeast
  - 1. Baking powders
  - 2. Self-raising flour
  - 3. Use of hydrochloric acid
- VIII. Relative nutritive value of different varieties of bread

#### INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

- I. Result of industrial education in the elementary schools
  - 1. A more careful grouping of children
    - a. With reference to their capabilities
    - b. With reference to their home conditions
  - 2. A more democratic arrangement of courses of study
  - 3. A new unit in school system
    - a. Vocational school
  - 4. A more cordial feeling of interresponsibility
  - 5. A closer unification of all the work of the elementary course
    - a. Related studies
  - 6. A longer school day with longer and fewer periods
  - 7. Better teaching of subjects by careful distinction between essentials and nonessentials
  - 8. An awakening and clearer insight of teachers into the possibilities of their work

The following student's outline is an example of the processes whereby a typical theme involving both mastery of fact and interpretation of it was formulated. The first step was

the jotting down of twenty-one topics in the order in which they now stand. Then followed an examination of these and placing of Roman numerals at the left to indicate the various groups into which they naturally fall. Next came the insertion of arabic numerals to indicate subdivisions, and letters and further numerals (in parentheses) as still smaller divisions were recognized.

#### THE CUBAN SITUATION (AUTUMN, 1912)

- I           I   The approach of the Cuban election
- I, a       II  Absence of political platforms
- I, b       II  Strong personal feelings
- 3           I   Common desire of all Cuban leaders
- 2, b       II  The two parties: Liberal and Conservative
- 2, c, (2)  II  Zaya, the Liberal candidate
- 2, c, (1)  II  Menocal, the Conservative candidate
- 2, a       II  Gomez, the present president, and his attitude
- I           IV  The former interventions of the United States
- I           III Similarity to the other Latin-American countries  
The registration system, perfected by Taft (omitted)
- I, c       II  Charges made concerning opponents
- 3           IV  Readiness of United States to interfere
- 4           IV  The apparent ultimate annexation of Cuba
- 5           IV  Giving Cuba many opportunities for self-government
- I, a, (1)  II  The only necessity for party names
- 2           IV  The United States' duty to avert a Cuban revolution
- 2           III Cuban elections usually contested
- 2           I   The Cuban idea of political success
- 3           III Revolution does not precede election
- 3           III Revolution in view after election

The original list thus annotated, when cast into the form of an outline, demanded the addition of a few further headings — some of them the general groupings into which the

topics fall, some of them subdivisions ; and the whole thus supplemented took the following shape :

#### THE CUBAN SITUATION

- I. Introduction
  1. The approach of the Cuban election
  2. The Cuban idea of political success
  3. Common desire of all Cuban leaders
- II. The characteristics of Cuban politics (supplied)
  1. In general (supplied)
    - a. Absence of political platforms
      - (1) Necessity for party names
      - b. Strength of personal feelings
      - c. Hostility between opponents
    2. Present state of affairs (supplied)
      - a. Gomez, the president, and his attitude
      - b. The two political parties
        - (1) The Conservative
        - (2) The Liberal
      - c. The candidates (supplied)
        - (1) Menocal, the Conservative
        - (2) Zaya, the Liberal
  - III. Characteristics of Cuban elections (supplied)
    1. Similarity to other Latin-American countries
    2. Cuban elections usually contested
    3. Revolution does not precede but follows election
  - IV. Cuba and the United States (supplied)
    1. Former interventions by the United States
    2. United States' duty to avert a revolution
    3. Readiness of the United States to interfere
    4. Apparent need of annexation
    5. Opportunities given Cuba for self-government
  - V. Conclusion : Necessity for surrender of personal ambition when in conflict with national development (supplied)

*The habit of orderliness.* It is probably time to say once more that the writer of this book does not for a moment

entertain the illusion that experienced men of letters consciously pass through all of the stages detailed herein. Sometimes, because of their freedom from the necessity of deliberately taking these successive steps, they even make the mistake of thinking that they do not take them unconsciously, and of deriding a painstaking analysis of a subject or a careful synthesis of a composition as they might deride the difficulty of eating peas with a fork or of buttoning a shoe. The point for the student of composition, however, is not at all to consider whether the professional writer has to concentrate his attention as the tyro does, but to consider whether a man can be anything but a tyro until by conscious self-discipline he so accustoms himself to the right processes that they become automatic. Many a well-trained writer can foresee and carry through an entire line of thought, developing it as he goes, just as an expert chessplayer sufficiently drilled in his science can play a dozen games simultaneously while blindfolded. The way to learn to play chess, however, is at the start to have but one board in front of you and to have your eyes very wide open.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE OUTLINE—INTEREST

**The double task of exposition.** The undertaking in almost all exposition which is not of the most severely matter-of-fact sort is actually a double one. The first and superficial part is to represent fact. To mention this as superficial is not to imply contempt for this much in itself. It is, however, a fundamental process which can be taught and learned. A group of twenty-five students of all degrees of artistic capacity could be put through a course of education at the

conclusion of which, if the mere exact representation of fact were the beginning and end of exposition, practically every one would be able to do creditable work. But the second part of exposition is not merely to reproduce fact but to interpret it. One of these steps is the evidence of knowledge; in the other is the beginning of wisdom. One of these can be achieved by almost mechanical means; the other is a personal achievement. To get exposition which is the result of both processes, but in its excellence particularly the result of the second, comes from the writer's act of putting his mind against his subject. This is no less real an experience than putting one's shoulder to the wheel. It should involve contact between mind and material, friction, and the consequent result.

**The need of resourcefulness.** Whatever the subject in hand, poverty or richness of result depends on how far the writer has entered into his subject. If he is discoursing for class purposes on "Domestic Manners of the Phoenicians," for instance, or on "City Life in Babylonia," and is making every effort to state only what can be historically demonstrated, he still has a chance to make his composition vivid by allusion, comparison, or contrast to some other type or period of civilization or to present-day conditions known to his readers. If he is writing on vast processes of geologic times in presenting some report upon a district, he can still, for a general audience, depend largely on the fact that many of the fundamental processes of geology are illustrated every time the spring comes, or a thunderstorm cuts a gully in the neighborhood, or the wind piles up a drift of ice or snow or sand. In exposition which deals with ideas the opportunity is offered to a writer to illustrate general principles by allusions drawn

from the whole field of learning, which are limited only by the limitations of the author.

Thus success in making exposition do its work depends very largely upon the resourcefulness of the writer—not necessarily upon the number of miles he has traveled, of people he has seen, or even of books he has read, but upon his alertness of mind and the degree to which he can make himself associate and illuminate one idea with another. Variety of experience, travel, contact with people, wide reading—all these resources, other matters being equal, give an advantage to him who has enjoyed them. But a logy-minded man, with all the advantages that man and nature could bestow upon him, will write far less effectively than a wide-awake young person who is thinking actively all the while he lives.

**The danger of cleverness.** There is a temptation, to the inexperienced in the use of allusion, to employ it for purposes of parade. This kind of vanity is always "hoist with his own petard." Macaulay, one of the most learned of his generation, was singularly skillful in limiting his abundant supply of allusions to the sort which were certain to be understood by nearly everyone who read them. He was not concerned with creating an impression; what he most wanted was to make himself interesting. Edgar Allan Poe, on the other hand, had an odd and irritating trick of indulging in allusions of a recondite nature which mean nothing to nine tenths of his readers. For purposes of clarifying what he had to say, they are of course worse than useless. Their one value is in giving a kind of atmosphere to the paragraphs which contain them, and frequently, it should be said, it is evident on the second glance that this atmosphere rather than any explication was what Poe sought.

**Writing for special classes of readers.** This leads naturally to the adjustment of discourse to the readers for whom it is designed. Discarding altogether the question of writing or speaking for the immature or illiterate, the writer must still recognize the various attitudes of mind and grades of experience represented among adult and educated people.

The proper reading public for the college writer to keep in mind is naturally his own fellows, and particularly the members of his own class. This is a specialized public, capable of appreciating any literature, but especially equipped with certain kinds of information. Of these the writer should take advantage. They are familiar with local history, both of the community and of the college. They are familiar with collegiate matters in general and with the terminology of the college, which is so well known to them that they fail to appreciate that it is technical to the noncollegian. They have the further advantage of a collegiate level of information. It might not be safe to depend upon the too exact knowledge of the subjects which they studied on the way to college, but in general this material has become a part of them, and the older students have a distinctly larger storehouse of information than the freshmen. Thus the students of a given class have doubtless mastered the stock requirements necessary to date in their course, and will recognize with peculiar quickness allusions with which they have needed to become acquainted through studying the principles of political economy, the basic facts of European history, and so on.

However, a writer should be able, whenever he needs, to write and speak with effectiveness to others than his own kind. The college professor who has the gift for it would naturally speak in somewhat different tongues before the learned society

which is dedicated to his own specialty and to a group of bankers and transportation men. This modification of style may often be highly desirable, as it induces a man to use a forthright English instead of technical jargon or as it persuades him to speak with a simple directness of which he has lost the habit. Moreover it is a healthy experience for anyone, as it is a good antidote for any Pharisaism he may suffer from. A modification of one's natural style does not necessitate "talking down," but rather takes a speaker or writer out of himself and induces him to speak or write with the point of view of his auditors or readers in mind. For a rhetorical exercise, it is good practice to write upon the same idea for two or three sets of supposed readers ; for one's own class, for example ; for a group of high-school boys ; then for a journal published by the Chamber of Commerce ; then for a set of street-railway employees.

#### EXERCISE

Read carefully the following passages, two of which are selections about as long as themes and the third of which was written as a student composition.

With reference to their Clearness : (1) put in a sentence the point, or central idea, of each ; (2) note the presence or absence of definition in each ; (3) put into brief topics the main divisions of each and consider whether the divisions are logical and whether the order might be improved.

With reference to their Interest : (1) mark the degree to which these subjects are made interesting by the ways in which commonplace facts are both explained and interpreted ; (2) note the wide variety of illustrations, and, in distinction from these, of allusions ; (3) in one passage there are traces

of "cleverness." Is it effective or not? (4) two of the selections were evidently modified to catch and hold the attention of people of average education and culture; one was written for bookish readers. How can we tell?

#### FASHION IN LANGUAGE

A powerful influence in bringing in new words or reviving old ones, as well as in changing the use and meaning of established expressions, is what may be called, in a broad way, "fashion,"—a term under which we include not merely the fads and whimsicalities of the moment, but certain larger and more impressive movements and tendencies. The sway of fashion is easily detected both in literature and in our common talk. In the case of literature, we dignify such habits of expression by calling them stylistic tendencies. When they attract our attention in colloquial speech, we stigmatize them as slang or affectation. In the uncontrolled utterances of the street boy, these tendencies result in the rapid propagation of every new phrase that falls upon his ear, till there grows up a language so grotesquely vulgar as to acquire a kind of humorous right to existence. In the domain of letters, they result in those large differences of style which characterize particular schools of writing or even distinct "epochs" or "ages" in literary history. Yet the underlying principles are the same in literature and in the individual,—fondness for novelty, the desire to be original, and finally, the wish of every man to be as wise as his neighbor, which results in a general imitation of whatever is striking or distinctive.

The effect of fashion in introducing new words into our vocabulary, in bringing certain words already existent into peculiar prominence for the time being, and in banishing some old words altogether, may be observed by contrasting the language of different individuals who, though frequenting much each other's society, are nevertheless brought under the control of different modes of expression. Thus, a law student, a medical student, and a young "sport," will be sure to have widely different vocabularies, even if they are personal friends. This is true not only when they are "talking shop," but when they are discussing subjects quite outside of their professional interests. The young lawyer will be sure to interlard his conversation

with fragments of legal lore and with figures of speech derived from his text-books. The physician will find it difficult to avoid allusions to the clinic or the dissecting-room. The sporting man will speak a dialect compounded of the race-track, the prize-ring, and the football field. And all this may be quite without affectation. The words that we hear oftenest and that are associated with our dearest interests must come to our lips most readily. That a physician should speak of "dissecting" a subject, a chemist of "analyzing" it, a preacher of "expounding" it, is as natural as that an ordinary man should speak of "explaining" it or "making it clear." A calamity may be called "a cropper" by the horsey man, "a knockout" by the amateur of pugilism, "a lost case" by a lawyer. Such differences will be perceptible both in the colloquial dialect and in more dignified speech.

Another fashion is the knack of literary allusion. It is akin to the habit of quotation, — itself a fashion in language that comes and goes; but it shows itself in a less formal and tangible way. The use of scraps of French, much commoner fifty years ago than at present, and the trick of using big words on slight occasion, whether for humorous effect or for the sake of "talking like a book," are other examples of individual peculiarities which may at any moment become general.

But the sway of fashion may be observed not merely in the several vocabularies of speakers whose professions are different, but also in the changes that come over one's own vocabulary as it is subjected to successive influences in the course of a lifetime. School or the university produces a marked effect on the speech of a young man. Another immediate change comes about when he begins a study of his profession, or enters upon the business of his life. Even after one's vocabulary seems definitely established, current events of general interest will always modify it strongly for the time being. During the heat of a political campaign everybody talks political jargon, even when politics are not under discussion. The Spanish War filled American ears with hitherto unheard-of words of Spanish origin, and the war in South Africa has familiarized all of us with an odd corner of the Dutch vocabulary, hitherto known only to South African colonists. For a time it was easy to call any difficult barrier a *trocha*, and the policy of *reconcentration* often

appeared in strange company. So every little hill was a *kopje*, a lodging-place of any kind was a *laager*, all sorts of things were *commandeered*, and the suggestion that this or that might "stagger humanity" was on every lip. Similarly, intense religious excitement may charge the language of an individual or a community with biblical or theological terms or phrases. Within a century the progress of scientific discovery and invention, and the rise of the economic and social sciences, have profoundly affected our speech. "Society" and "social" have taken on new senses. The "social problem" means much more than it ever did before. "Unproductive consumer," "unearned increment," "the law of supply and demand," "medium of exchange," "standard of living," "wages fund," "pauper labor," "co-operative association," are commonly heard, even from persons who have never read a chapter of political economy. "Evolution," "the struggle for existence," "the survival of the fittest," have become so vague in their common application that one hardly dares to employ them in serious discussion for fear of begging the question. "Force" is regularly used to explain everything, as if it were not in itself a word that assumes the very point which it attempts to prove. Indeed, it has become one of the vague terms which language requires to express indefinite and indefinable conceptions.

These are some of the fashions that every grown-up man can remember as having from time to time increased his vocabulary, and either enriched or impoverished his thought.—GREENOUGH and KITTREDGE, "Words and their Ways in English Speech"

#### THE OLD-FASHIONED ANNUALS

"The Token" belonged to the class of illustrated publications known as Annuals. It was the age of Annuals, Gift Books, Boudoir Books, Books of Beauty, Flowers of Loveliness, and Leaflets of Memory. The taste for these ornate combinations of literature and art was imported from England, where the Ackermanns had published "The Forget-Me-Not," the earliest specimen of the kind, in 1823. Carey & Lea of Philadelphia brought out the first American Annual, "The Atlantic Souvenir," for which Willis had been asked to write, when in college, and to which he actually did contribute a copy of birthday verses, "I'm twenty-two—

I'm twenty-two," in the volume for 1829. These were written, he affirmed, "in a blank leaf of a barber's Testament, while waiting to be shaved." They were also inserted in the "London Literary Souvenir" for the same year, by Alaric A. Watts, a copious editor of Annuals, whose middle initial was cruelly asserted by Lockhart to stand for *Attila*. The rage for Annuals soon became general and lasted for about twenty years. Goodrich enumerates some forty of them, bearing such fantastic titles as The Gem, The Opal, The Wreath, The Casket, The Rose, The Amulet, The Keepsake, Pearls of the West, Friendship's Offering. And these are probably not half the list. There were religious Annuals, juvenile Annuals, oriental, landscape, botanic Annuals. Most rummagers among the upper shelves of an old library have taken down two or three of them, blown the dust from their gilt edges, ruffed the tissue papers that veil "The Bride," "The Nun," "The Sisters," and "The Fair Penitent," and wondered in what age of the world these remarkable "embellishments" and the still more remarkable letter-press which they embellish could have reflected American life.

There is a faded elegance about them, as of an old ball dress: a faint aroma, as of withered roses, breathes from the page. Those steel-engraved beauties, languishing, simpering, insipid as fashion plates, with high-arched marble brows, pearl necklaces, and glossy ringlets — not a line in their faces or a bone in their bodies: that Highland Chieftain, that Young Buccaneer, that Bandit's Child, all in smoothest *mezzotint*, — what kind of a world did they masquerade in? It was a needlework world, a world in which there was always moonlight on the lake and twilight in the vale; where drooped the willow and bloomed the eglantine, and jessamine embowered the cot of the village maid; where the lark warbled in the heavens and the nightingale chanted in the grove 'neath the mouldering ivy-mantled tower; where vesper chimes and the echoes of the merry bugle-ugle-ugle horn were borne upon the zephyr across the yellow corn; where Isabella sang to the harp (with her hair down) and the tinkling guitar of the serenader under her balcony made response; a world in which there were fairy isles, enchanted grottoes, peris, gondolas, and gazelles. All its pleasantly *rococo* landscape has vanished, brushed rudely away by realism and a "sincere" art and an "earnest" literature.

In these Gems and Albums, the gemmy and albuminous illustrations alternated with romantic tales of mediæval or eastern life and with "Lines on Seeing —," or "Stanzas occasioned by" something. "The May-Flowers of Life," for example, "suggested by the author's having found a branch of May in a volume of poems which a friend had left there several years ago." In the Annual dialect a ship was a "bark," a bed was a "couch," a window was a "casement," a shoe was a "sandal," a boat was a "shallop," and a book was a "tome." Certain properties became gemmy by force of association, as sea-shells, lattices, and Æolian harps. In England L. E. L. and in America Percival and Mrs. Sigourney were perhaps the gemmest poets. But much of Willis's poetry was album verse, with an air of the boudoir and the ball-room about it, a silky elegance and an exotic perfume that smack of that very sentimental and artificial school. This passage from "The Declaration" is in point:—

" 'T was late and the gay company was gone,  
And light lay soft on the deserted room  
From alabaster vases, and a scent  
Of orange leaves and sweet verbena came  
From the unshuttered window on the air,  
And the rich pictures, with their dark old tints,  
Hung like a twilight landscape, and all things  
Seemed hushed into a slumber. Isabelle,  
The dark-eyed, spiritual Isabelle,  
Was leaning on her harp."

— HENRY A. BEERS, "Life of Nathaniel Parker Willis"

#### ON THE SENDING OF MORSE TELEGRAPH CHARACTERS

Probably almost everyone has at some time or other come across a Morse telegraph code together with a description of the instruments and the way they work. Most physics text-books have a word or two about telegraphy, explaining the principles of the key, relay and sounder and showing how the characters are formed by combinations of short and long clicks,— it being understood that a click is really composed of two clicks, one for the up and one for

the down stroke of the sounder ; and that its length is determined by the interval between the two. From such a description it might seem that the characters as they are read from the sounder are as regular and as constant in form as the letters on a typewritten page. But this is not at all so, for, it must be remembered, the characters are made by the arm and wrist muscles of the sounding operators ; and they vary as much as the operators themselves.

Each operator has a way of making the characters which is as peculiar to him as his handwriting. It is known as his "fist," and like handwriting it is more individual in some people than in others. It may be firm and clean-cut or loose and wabbly, and when it becomes fixed it may serve as a means of identification. Even when he sends with a "bug," which is an instrument for making the short clicks, or dots, automatically, the operator still has his "fist," although his sending becomes mechanical and altogether different from his hand sending. The personal touch results from the way he handles his "bug" or his key, just as a person's handwriting results from the way he handles his pen.

The sending of all operators falls into a few classes, such as light sending, heavy sending, nervous and jerked sending, and so on. The heavy sender lays his hand heavily on the key and barely raises it to make the spaces between the dots and the dashes. As a result the sounder tends to stick on the down stroke, and the characters run together. The light sender works in just the opposite way. His key makes a very light contact, which causes the sounder to emphasize the up stroke. When the wires are working well, these faults—if they can be called faults—are hardly noticeable ; but when, on account of a storm, the wire is leaking current at every pole, the instruments must be adjusted to a hair-line to read a light or a heavy sounder and when the wire swings and the current wavers, it is enough to make the receiver pull his teeth and gnash his hair. The nervous sender is perhaps worse than these two, for he is often rather hard to read even under good conditions. He loosens the spring on his key and adjusts the points very close to each other so that a mere touch will make the contact. This is because he does not rely on his brain to control his muscles in sending, but on a spasmodic action of the nerves of his arm. He can make his arm tremble, it seems, on its own nerves without any

connection with the rest of his nervous system, and still control the trembling just enough to form dots and dashes on the key. Nerve sending is very rapid and very light; but from the nature of it, it is also very erratic and comes poorly to the receiver over a long wire or over a wire not in perfect condition. The "jerked" sender is usually a beginner, or "ham," although many operators grow old at the work and still use a "jerked fist." This is because their sending is never done by reflex action, but always requires conscious effort; and the effect appears just as it does in writing or piano-playing or any other action of the same kind. It is hard to describe just how such sending sounds to an operator. Perhaps the best description is that of a dispatcher, who said it sounded "like pebbles rolling through a tin horn."

The sending of every operator falls into some class such as these; but in addition it has something in it that belongs to him alone. Although it is very difficult to discover just where this individual touch lies, its effect is easily seen. It may be in the regularity or the peculiar irregularity of his sending; or in the relative length he makes his dots and dashes; or in his way of spacing; or perhaps in some difficulty he has in combining; or perhaps in all of these. Some operators have a way of making a dot in certain combinations as long as a very short dash; some cannot tack on the final dot in a 3 (· · · · ·); some cannot break off a string of dots as in an 8 (— · · · ·) or a 6 (· · · · · ·) or a P (· · · · ·) until they have made two or three times the proper number; some cannot smoothly put a dash at the end of a number of dots; some cannot follow a dash with dots; some split long characters up into two short ones. These are only a few very noticeable peculiarities. Those which are most effective in giving a personal touch to an operator's sending are not so easily picked out. And these examples are not only in the formation of letters and numbers. There are other traits in forming words, spacing and in varying speed that contribute toward the same effect.

Other peculiarities in an operator's sending give expression to the way he feels at the time he is working. These, however, are not so much in how he sends as in what he sends. Of course when he gets excited or very angry, an operator sends faster,—often so fast that no one on this green earth can tell what he

means. In addition to this speeding up, there are a number of signs which, originally abbreviation or punctuation marks, are now mostly used to express emotion. Perhaps the handiest of these is the exclamation point — four dashes followed by a dot. This generally denotes surprise with a note of expostulation. It is much used by "hams" and "plugs" (a plug is an inefficient operator who is old at the business) when they are too slow to catch what is said to them and are a little ashamed to use the question mark, which is the usual sign of misunderstanding. When so used it seems to lay the fault at the door of the sender rather than at that of the receiver. When it is sent very sharply, it may mean a feeling of outraged indignation. Another sign somewhat like this one is "JK," which is a very rhythmical combination. (— · — — —) It is used to signify very much surprise and very much anger or very much of both. When Jack Johnson whipped Jeffries an operator who had lost some money on the fight might have said "Well, JK" and considered that he had fully expressed his feelings. Contempt is shown by carefully spelling out each word with a space after each letter. This is often done when some "ham" or "plug" requires a phrase repeated two or three times. The comma (· — —) is used in much the same way as the printed "er"; that is, to fill in the time while the operator gets his thoughts in order. It is well adapted to express hesitation, for it sounds to an operator's ear as if something more were needed to complete the character. More formal hesitation is expressed by a string of double dots. The operator laughs with "HI HI" (.... .. .... ..). Doubtless this comes from "HA" (.... —), a sign which some operators use for laughter. "HA," however, ends with a dash, which makes it sound stilted and affected in comparison with the rattle of dots in "HI." Sarcastic laughter is expressed by a plain "HAW" (.... · — · — —) sent slowly. These are only a few of a great number of similar signs which have little meaning in themselves outside of the feeling they express. A great many of them are profane in the extreme, for operators have gained a great reputation, especially in the small towns, for general dissoluteness of character; and they need a supply of handy expressions for their feelings.

With all this it can easily be understood how what sounds to a layman like a meaningless rattle comes to have for the operator

somewhat of the quality of a living voice. The dots and dashes do not come to him as dots and dashes, nor do the characters come to him as letters. He receives "the Morse" as a connected string of ideas and thinks but little more of the sound of the instrument than of the sound of a person's voice. Doubtless this is to some extent on account of the abbreviations he uses: like "WT" for *what*; "TT" for *that*; "WN" for *when*; "CMG" for *coming*, and the like. To his ear "WT" does not mean a "W" and a "T" which must be joined in the mind to the idea "what"; it means "what" just as much as the spoken word does. For some people, who seem born to be consummate operators, telegraphy is almost as good a means of expression as speech, and often better than writing.

In straight message work, where "the Morse" is copied on a typewriter as it comes in, these traits of character in sending are not so noticeable. The operator receives his messages and takes them down without paying any attention to them. Often he is thinking of something else altogether. But in block offices where practically all the work is like conversation, the feeling is different. Operators strike up friendships, get into fights, crack jokes, and swap lies without ever seeing or hearing each other and with nothing more between them than a piece of brass. And yet they know one another. — (Student theme)

# CHAPTER IX

## ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

*Formal argumentation defined.* Argumentation aims to convince. Argumentation more than contentiousness. Argumentation different from pure logic.

*Preparation for a formal argument.* Taking preliminary notes. Finding the issues. Re-reading for special points.

*Formulation of the brief.* The proposition. The introduction. The direct proof. The refutation. Specimen briefs.

*Development of the brief.*

*Formal and informal argument compared.*

*Having an agreement as to terms and issues.*

*Subjects open to informal argument.* Matters of personal interest. Matters of group interest. Matters of public interest. Matters of general speculative interest.

*The tone of informal argument.*

### I. FORMAL ARGUMENTATION

#### FORMAL ARGUMENTATION DEFINED

**Argumentation aims to convince.** In formal argumentation the speaker tries to convince his hearers that the proposition he is defending is sound. His aim is conviction, and the securing then and there of a verdict in his favor. A parliamentary speaker desires to win votes for his cause; a lawyer wishes to convince the judge or jury of the justice of his case; and the public debater hopes to gain the formal decision of those who judge the contest. The problem in hand then is: How shall he set about this difficult task of bringing hard-headed judges or unwilling auditors to his point of

view? How can he arrange the material in hand so as to make it most effective and telling? Shall he plunge at once to the heart of the question and then build up the argument around this core, or shall he lead up gradually to a climax which overtops all opposition? Must he confine himself to hard and fast logic, may he intersperse his remarks with wit and humor, anecdote and personal reminiscence? Can he best reach the mind through the heart, by working upon the sympathies of the judges? To these questions no absolute answer can safely be made. There is no one method which is best for all times and under all circumstances. The speaker, the subject matter, the occasion, the character of the judge or jury—constantly changing factors—must all be considered in every case of formal argument. The best that can be done, therefore, is to lay down certain general principles which hold good in a measure whatever the conditions, and to illustrate various possibilities of effective argument. It must be left to the student to use his own judgment as different occasions require.

**Argumentation more than contentiousness.** Argument, as already stated, aims to convince; it is not, therefore, mere contentiousness, which is talking for mere talk's sake or at least for a negative effect. The so-called arguments in political harangues, in partisan newspaper editorials, in a large part of the speeches in our legislatures, and in the ordinary smoking-room and grocery-store discussions are illustrations of contentiousness. These are often no more than verbal duels—sharpening to the wits, no doubt, but having no other motive than desire for personal satisfaction. The wish to convince one's audience is secondary to the desire to embarrass one's opponent and to give an impression of cleverness.

**Argumentation different from pure logic.** Again, argumentation is something different from logic. A pure logician is an intellectual machine. He takes an hypothesis from which by a close chain of reasoning he may arrive at a definite conclusion. But he is not concerned with the effect of his conclusion, and he is not anxious to establish a principle as a basis for action. He is concerned, however, with the correctness of the steps by which he has reached his conclusion. Granted his hypothesis, he insists upon intellectual assent to the final deductions therefrom. But while the aim of logic is thus different from that of argumentation, logic nevertheless is fundamental to sound argument. The main points in a case may be derived from statistical data or may be based upon the accepted facts of everyday life, but the conclusions drawn from these data must be logical. Step by step the development of the argument is a logical process differing only from pure logic in that it is frequently embellished by illustrative material. The intellectual conclusion is reënforced and strengthened by an emotional appeal or by reference to conditions granted to be true. In other words, to logic is added what is called persuasion. Since conviction is the end, if logic alone will not convince, other means must be brought to bear. Logic, however, always remains the backbone of argumentation.

#### PREPARATION FOR FORMAL ARGUMENT

The first step in the preparation of an argument is the collection of material and the mastery of the case. The method of going about this task will vary somewhat according to the extent of the existing knowledge on the question, but it is always necessary at the first to get clearly in mind

the points to be proved. If a man already has a considerable knowledge of the subject, he can draw up a preliminary outline of the chief points in the case, which may be revised as he goes more fully into the subject. If he has but little present information, however, a provisional outline is practically valueless. We shall assume here this lack of previous knowledge.

**Taking preliminary notes.** Under these circumstances the first step is to read widely on the subject. In this preliminary reading emphasis cannot be placed too strongly upon the necessity of reading the arguments against the proposition, for nothing so quickly opens up the issues of the case and reveals the points that must be proved. Read both sides of the question, then, and take careful notes with precise references as you read. One cannot afford either to forget a point once covered or to lose a quotation once found ; and no more can one afford to do the labor twice. It has been said that the three steps necessary in the preparation of a case are as follows : "Read, read much, read very much." To these Foster adds three supplementary ones : "Think, think much, think very much." The first precept applies perfectly to the collection of material, and the second to the analysis of the data collected.

**Finding the issues.** After the general field of reading has been covered, very much thought should be given to the points in conflict, or the issues about which the argument must be constructed. The issues may range from one to an indefinite number ; but if there are more than five or six, a second selection should limit the argument to those which are of most importance. An argument may arise, for example, on the proposition that in a certain recitation building, elevators should be installed for the use of girl students. A difference of opinion is conceivable on the actual desirability

of supplying such service, even if there were no obstacles in the way. Disagreement may be certain as to the possibility of having any elevator equipment effective during the rush period between classes. Or the main clash may center on whether the necessary money is available or should be diverted from other channels to this one. If there is a common assumption on all these points, there is no ground for argument. If there is agreement on any of them, time and energy should be diverted from this portion to the issues on which disagreement is inevitable. A provisional outline may then be drawn up with these issues as the backbone.

Similarly a more formal argument may always be resolved into several main issues. In the briefs developed hereafter concerning a minimum-wage law, the affirmative to win its case must set forth the points of conflict with the negative in such a light that the balance of argument will lie in their favor. The negative in their turn must do the same thing. The points of conflict will then become the following :

The affirmative contends

- I. That low wages are due to the poor bargaining power of the workmen.
- II. That a minimum-wage law will raise real wages.
- III. That a minimum wage will not cause unemployment.
- IV. That a minimum wage can be enforced.
- V. That restriction of immigration is not sufficient to solve the problem.

The negative contends

- I. That low wages are due to an oversupply of labor.
- II. That real wages cannot be increased by law.
- III. That a minimum wage will cause an increase of unemployment.
- IV. That a minimum wage cannot be enforced.
- V. That restriction of immigration will solve the problem.

On the relative strength of these arguments depends the outcome of the contest. The whole case should therefore be constructed with a view to driving home these main points most effectively.

**Re-reading for special points.** The issues outlined, the reading should again be resorted to; not desultorily, but with reference to specific points and arguments. In many cases consultation of the quotations and of the arguments abstracted will alone be necessary. In other cases a second reading will often shed new light on the question. In still other cases new reading will have to be undertaken in search of specific material as evidence on particular points in the argument. A more or less complete revision of the case will often result from this second reference to the materials.

#### FORMULATION OF THE BRIEF

Having mastered the subject as nearly as is possible, it remains to draw up a comprehensive outline or brief. There is no universal rule which requires a detailed brief of the argument to be presented. Many persons with long experience are able to present the complete argument with the greatest apparent ease from a very meager outline. This power is, however, obtained only through long apprenticeship with a definite outline. A man who has never tied himself to a brief is usually lacking in consistency and vaguely rambling in the flow of his argument. Only the master is above the brief.

**The proposition.** The process of brief-building can be followed with reference to the affirmative and negative briefs on the minimum-wage proposition, the issues of which have been already cited. First is necessary an exactly stated proposition. Exposition deals with ideas which may be expressed

in phrases ; but argument always deals with ideas which must be put into sentences. The present proposition asserts what the states should do and in whose behalf it should be done, and by means of the last two words dismisses the question of constitutionality as an issue in the argument. This proposition of course serves for both sides in a debate, and for an independent argument it would be necessary only to introduce *not*.

*Resolved* : That the states should establish schedules of minimum wages for unskilled workmen, constitutionality conceded.

**The introduction.** The order of steps, it is evident, is the same in principle as that dealt with at length in the chapters on Exposition and Narration. The subject, the conclusion, and the main divisions must all be well in hand before the introduction is undertaken. Moreover, there is little unique about the introduction to an argument. The two things it should do are to make the situation clear, as in the first paragraphs of an exposition, and to make it interesting, as in the opening of a story. The one feature peculiar to it is that in debate, which is always opened by the affirmative, the negative introduction may refer to statements which have just been made, and that even the affirmative may indulge in what yachtsmen and horsemen know as "jockeying for position."

*Introductions for Clearness.* The simplest opening which contributes to Clearness in argument is the kind which begins with that definition of terms which is often of equal importance in exposition (see pp. 210-216). In the affirmative brief which follows, four terms, *unskilled workmen*, *schedules*, *states*, and *minimum wage*, are all so defined that there is no chance left for disagreement or misunderstanding as the argument proceeds. Since the introduction should supply such

material as is necessary to an understanding of the case, a brief history of the question is often required. In the affirmative brief which follows, however, this does not come at the outset because the history of the measure serves as information at the same time that it is being used as direct proof of its practicability, thus doing double duty. The most straightforward method of paving the way is to give a clear prospect of the course of the argument by definitely stating the issues in the order which is to be followed. This is done at the end of each of the four introductions quoted below.

*Introductory appeals for Interest.* Appeals for Interest are frequently combined with preliminary statements for Clearness. A tactful approach, though it does not convince, may at least assure the sympathetic reading or hearing of an argument. An appeal to common sympathies, common sense, or common acceptance of established public opinion will often establish a friendly attitude. An introduction to the negative of the minimum-wage question based on the brief given above has been developed as follows :

Speeches like the one to which we have just listened have moved audiences since the world began and will no doubt continue to move audiences in the centuries to come. To portray the harsh conditions which fall to the lot of the masses is enough to touch the heart of any man. And to contrast these conditions with the affluence of the rich strikes the chords of deepest sympathy. This is true whether the reform advocated be the minimum wage, an income tax, a reduction of the tariff, limiting the hours of work for women and children, or whether it be an appeal to join the ranks of socialism. The strength of all radical measures lies in their appeal to the sympathy of mankind ; and their danger, we may add, lies in this very same fact,— that they find their support in the heart and not in the mind, in feeling and not in common sense.

We recognize that in opposing a humanitarian measure such as the one advocated by our opponents, we lay ourselves open to the grave charge of conservatism. But we must not forget that throughout history the real and permanent reforms have been guided by the hard logic of common sense rather than by the emotions. The real friend of the oppressed is not necessarily the person with the loudest speech nor the one who catches at every patent nostrum which is advanced. He is rather the one who thinks twice before he speaks at all, who considers well the ultimate effects of a proposed reform before asking for its adoption. Now, the measure which the affirmative proposes strikes at the very foundations of the individualistic system of society. Its purpose is to substitute for the free play of economic forces the artificial restrictions of the law. It aims to fix wages not by free contract between man and man but by a mere fiat of the state. To raise the low wages of the unskilled workmen, to give them better food and clothing and shelter, the affirmative say, "All that is necessary is to pass a law." We believe you will agree with us that before we adopt a measure so revolutionary in purpose and so ambitious in character, we should reason carefully together in an endeavor to ascertain the real nature and the ultimate effects of such a law. The negative will oppose the adoption of the minimum wage on four fundamental grounds. First, if the law is passed, it cannot be enforced; second, even if it could be enforced, it would not accomplish any of the things which the affirmative claim for it; third, it would on the contrary have positively harmful results; and fourth, there is a more effective means of raising the wages of the unskilled.

The following introduction from a debate between the universities of Chicago and Michigan on "The Recall of Elective Officials" will serve to illustrate how advantage may be taken of a well-defined public opinion to cut the introduction to a brief paragraph or two, thus saving time for the proof.

I need not tell this audience that there is corruption in our state and municipal governments. We have allowed ourselves to be governed by professional politicians who have been the tools of selfish interests. Everybody agrees that there is only one way to

end corruption and that is for the people to take an active part in government, not once in every few years, but all the time. The recall is one of several measures intended to give the people more direct control of governmental affairs. One of the first was the direct primary, by which the people name their own nominees for office instead of voting for nominees named by political bosses. This has been followed in some cases by the short ballot, which relieves the burden upon the voters; by the initiative, whereby the people can get the laws that they want; by the referendum, through which they can kill undesirable laws; and finally by the recall, which means that the voters who elect an official, whether of state, county, town, or village, have the power to remove that official at a special election if he has violated his trust.

The recall is a part of the progressive movement that is sweeping the entire country. This measure has had a brief but intense history. Originating ten years ago as a part of the commission form of city government, it has grown to be an important issue in national politics. At the present time it is in operation in its complete form in the three states of Oregon, California, and Arizona. Fifteen states provide for its adoption in city charters, and one hundred and fifty cities scattered throughout the United States have adopted it. It has the endorsement of such typical statesmen in both parties as Taft, Roosevelt, Wilson, and Bryan. Its most conspicuous opponent in this section of the country is Senator Lorimer, ably supported by the gentleman from Michigan.

Our argument in support of the recall will be presented in three main divisions:

First, we shall show that because there is gross misrepresentation by public officers, we need some remedy. Second, we shall prove that the recall gives the people the power to correct this misrepresentation. Third, we shall show that the recall in practice insures better government.

*Special tactics in debate.* In addition to the foregoing more or less set methods of introduction, the following are cited as examples of tactics especially adapted to debate. An excellent negative introduction, which immediately goes to the heart of the question by redefining the proposition to suit the

negative argument and then stating the issues to be proved, is the following from a debate between Harvard and Yale upon the question, "*Resolved*: That the federal government shall have the power to impose an income tax among the states according to population."

Upon the very threshold of our remarks this evening let us spend a moment in an effort to ascertain just what the real issues in this discussion are. The constitutional provision that direct taxes shall be apportioned among the states according to population, taken in connection with the decision of the United States Supreme Court that an income tax is a direct tax, makes an amendment to the constitution an absolute necessity if this proposed power is to be conferred upon Congress. Without altering in the slightest, then, the significance of this question, we may state it in more specific language, as follows: *Resolved*: That the federal constitution should be so amended as to empower Congress to impose an income tax among the states according to population.

Now, if we can succeed in showing, first, that the Constitution should not be amended until the power conferred by that amendment should be immediately exercised, and secondly, that the power to impose an income tax should not be immediately exercised, then we shall have completely sustained our contention that the proposed amendment should not be enacted and the proper power not conferred. This we confidently believe we are going to do. Upon these two simple propositions we take our stand.

A very effective introduction, from the standpoint of debating tactics, was given a few years ago on the negative of a debate between the universities of Chicago and Michigan on the question of "The Federal Inheritance Tax." It was foreseen by the negative that the first speaker for the affirmative would devote his time in the main to expounding the merits of an inheritance tax as a fiscal measure. It was clear also that there was little that could be said against the tax as

such, and the first speaker on the negative therefore opened the case as follows :

To the intrinsic merits of an inheritance tax as a fiscal measure we offer no objection. On the contrary we wish to incorporate the argument of the preceding speaker and make it a part of our negative case. This brings the issue of this debate down to one question : Shall the inheritance tax be adopted as a federal measure or shall it be left to the various states ? The negative opposes a federal inheritance tax on the following grounds :

This resulted in entirely nullifying the first speech of the affirmative and practically gave the negative three speeches as against two for the opposition on the points at issue.

Another unusually effective means of attack is illustrated in a recent debate on the Aldrich banking plan. The first affirmative speech was given over entirely to showing that *any* sound banking system should incorporate certain fundamental principles. These principles were such as had the virtually unanimous indorsement of all students of the question and were therefore not open to criticism. Our present banking system was briefly subjected to this test and found wanting. It only remained, then, to show that the Aldrich plan incorporated these fundamentals and should therefore be adopted. By a skillful handling of the case as it developed, the negative was forced to prove one of the following propositions : first, that these fundamental principles were unsound ; second, that the Aldrich plan did not incorporate these principles ; third, that the present system did incorporate them ; fourth, that some substitute measure would be better than the Aldrich plan. The first three were known to be practically impossible to prove ; and the affirmative was prepared to show that any substitute measure which might be suggested would fall short

of the mark in some important respect. They were also prepared to defend the Aldrich measure against attack at other points than the fundamental ones named. It will be observed, therefore, that the whole case was built around certain carefully selected propositions, and the negative was never able successfully to break through and confuse the issues.

**The direct proof.** The direct proof in a brief is in all its essentials like the plan for more complex exposition (see pp. 216-227) except in one external respect. A plan for exposition may be constructed of topics; the brief for argument, from the proposition to the least subdivision, is composed of complete statements. The proposition is logically supported by each main affirmation in the proof, and each of these is based on assertions which are themselves capable of being expanded in the developed argument. All that has been said in earlier chapters about securing unity through right choice of material and about maintaining coherence and emphasis through attention to the order and the proportion of parts applies to the construction of direct proof, and so too all that has been said about Clearness of statement and Interest of detail. As a matter of form, an effective brief tabulates its complete statements under a system of letters and numbers (I, 1, *a*, (1)) with corresponding indentations. A useful brief is necessarily full. For instance, the following topical outline affords little aid to an understanding of the development of the case or of the main points at issue. At best it serves as a mere jog to the memory of the speaker and is an aid only in so far as a brief proper has been committed to memory.

## SUBJECT: THE MINIMUM WAGE

*Introduction*

- I. Nature of the minimum wage
- II. Bad conditions and low wages of the workers
  - 1. Economic effects
  - 2. Social effects
- III. A remedy is needed

*Proof*

- I. The minimum wage an effective remedy
- II. The minimum wage theoretically sound
- III. Analogy of other industrial legislation
- IV. The minimum wage is practicable

*Conclusion*

- I. The minimum wage should be established

**The refutation.** The remaining feature of argumentation, peculiar to this form of discourse, is refutation — the process of meeting the hostile arguments of the opposition. It has been already said that the best of preparation for argument is to study the reasoning of the other side, and the best writers and speakers never forget the opposition. In an independent piece of argument the objections of the other side must be anticipated and met as they are likely to rise in the mind of the reader. Every one who has studied Burke's "Speech on Conciliation with America" recalls how he repeatedly gainsays the idea that force must be used in dealing with the colonists. Whatever he who disagrees is likely to be thinking should be answered in its own time. In an oration or a printed argument there is no one place for refutation. It must be given space whenever it is pertinent.

On the other hand, rebuttal in debate should always be presented with reference to what has actually been said on

the other side. Nothing is more ineffective than to rebut points not in issue, except perhaps the failure to reply to points which are in the forefront of the discussion. But a considerable number of rebuttal points can be picked in advance for a certainty, and these should be carefully prepared. And while it is not necessary to write them out and commit them to memory, they should be run over in the mind until the speaker is sure that he can deliver them effectively.

At the beginning of each constructive speech, other than the first affirmative, two or three minutes should be reserved for refutation. Questions may have been asked which demand an immediate answer. The preceding speaker will presumably have left the floor, having made some telling points and having created a strong presumption in favor of his case. Some of these points are usually so vital that the argument of the opposition cannot continue until they are disposed of in one way or another. It may be that the refutation of certain points may preferably be reserved for a succeeding speaker ; but if so, it is necessary to state that the argument will be thus answered in due time. The audience, it must be remembered, has this argument in mind and will not be satisfied if it is ignored. For effect upon the audience, it is imperative that a speaker reply in some way to a telling argument before proceeding with his case.

The constructive speeches should also allow for considerable flexibility in presentation. A good example of the need for this may be found by reference again to the briefs on the minimum wage. The final argument of the affirmative is that the minimum wage can be enforced. The negative has already contended with much emphasis that the minimum wage, on the contrary, is impossible of enforcement. If the

affirmative speaker contents himself, therefore, simply with a presentation of his argument that it can be enforced and makes no reference whatever to the specific points of objection raised by the negative, he is but half debating. To convince his hearers that the measure can be enforced, he must show specifically why the objections of the negative are not pertinent. He must answer the argument of the opposition point by point and show it to be unsound. Or he may "begin his argument where the previous speaker left off" and show how his opponent really proves the case against himself.

A cardinal point to remember in refutation is that he who laughs last laughs best. Most arguments are open to attack at some point or other. The question then is: Shall the debater anticipate the objection and give his reply to it in advance, or shall he wait for the objection to be made by his opponents before replying to it? There is only one answer to this. In debate the objection should never be anticipated. Let the opposition appear to have scored a point and then come back with a telling reply. An audience likes nothing better than to see a man come up fighting when apparently he has been overwhelmed. In the minimum-wage case, for instance, one of the conflicting arguments, as just seen, is the matter of enforcement. The affirmative should not show its whole hand on this point at once. In the brief given it is stated that the minimum wage has proved successful in operation in Australia and in England. As subheads under the Australian experience, it appears that both employers and employees favor the minimum wage and that it has been constantly extended to new trades. These two subpoints should be reserved for refutation. A main statement of the successful operation of the law will suffice, unless the other side

brings forward evidence showing the contrary. When they have done this it will be time to offer these points as evidence for the affirmative. In case the opposition goes further and contends that since Australia is a new country of quite different conditions from those of the United States, the reply can be made that Australia and England represent two extremes, the new and the old, the sparsely and the densely populated, the radical and the conservative; and since both have found the minimum wage successful, the presumption in favor of its successful operation in the United States is therefore very strong. This should be saved for a final "come back" on the point of enforcement. The debater should always try to exercise a woman's prerogative and have the last word.

In case each speaker is given an opportunity for refutation, the first rebuttal speech should pick the issues and sound the keynote of the rebuttal arguments. Each side may exercise the right to choose the points which it deems easiest to defend and may conveniently overlook those of which it is fearful. The whole art in rebuttal is to make the opposition meet you on your chosen ground. The first negative rebuttal should summarize the issues of the debate by stating again the negative contentions. It should then be insisted that the affirmative must defend their case at these points of attack. This places the affirmative on the defensive at once. The first affirmative should also state the issues by emphasizing the strong points in their case, insisting that the negative contentions are either beside the point, immaterial, or unsound. The side that is cleverer in thus choosing the ground will seldom fail to secure the decision, for rebuttal is to a great degree a matter of debating tactics.

The two briefs on the minimum-wage question follow in detail :

*Resolved* : That the states should establish schedules of minimum wages for unskilled workmen, constitutionality conceded.

#### AFFIRMATIVE BRIEF

##### *Introduction*

###### I. Definition of question

1. By *unskilled workmen* is meant laborers, either men or women, whose tasks require no preliminary training or apprenticeship
2. By *schedules* is meant different rates for different industries and different conditions of employment
3. By *the states* is meant the forty-eight states of the union. Each state is to establish a schedule of wages for its own workmen
4. By a *minimum wage* is meant a wage lower than which no employer may pay his workmen, but above which he may pay as he chooses

##### *Proof*

###### I. The minimum wage for unskilled workmen is justifiable

1. Millions of unskilled laborers are getting wages too low to maintain their physical efficiency
  - a. This threatens ultimately a deterioration of the race
  - b. We are paying through charity and public institutions for the care of the resultant poor, diseased, and criminal
2. This condition of the masses is not due to inadequate production of commodities
  - a. The per capita wealth of the country has tremendously increased during the past fifty years
  - b. The rich are accumulating unprecedented fortunes
  - c. The annual output of goods has increased enormously because of progress in the technique of industry

3. It is due to the unequal bargaining power of laborers and employers
  - a. The laborer has but little knowledge of the market.
  - b. The laborer cannot wait. Immediate work is imperative
  - c. The congestion of labor requires the applicant to accept work on such terms as he can get
  - d. Organized laborers, who have equal bargaining power with employers, secure higher wages without increase of productivity
    - (1) Teamsters of Chicago thus raised wages from 20 to 25 cents an hour
    - (2) Waitresses in Chicago raised wages from \$6 to \$9 a week
    - (3) Shoe cutters in Brockton raised wages from \$7 to \$10 a week
    - (4) Stockyards laborers in Chicago, when their union failed, suffered a reduction in wages from 17½ to 15 cents an hour
4. Unskilled laborers cannot organize effectively
  - a. They have been proved incapable except in rare cases
  - b. They are too poor, too weak, too ignorant
  - c. They are of diverse races, languages, and ideals
  - d. Unionism among the unskilled is opposed by powerful capitalistic organizations
5. State action alone can secure to the unskilled a fair share of the product of industry and a decent living

II. The minimum wage would raise the standard of living for the unskilled

1. In many cases the increased wage could come out of profits, and prices would not be increased
2. In other cases the increased efficiency of the workmen would compensate the employer for the wage paid, and prices would not be raised
3. In such cases as would require a general rise in prices, the consuming public would bear the burden
4. Since workmen consume only a small portion of their own products, their real wages would be substantially increased

## III. The minimum wage is sound in theory

1. An industry which pays less than a living wage is parasitic and should not exist
2. Society has no right to the consumption of goods produced at less than a living wage
3. In any event, society has to pay the cost one way or another
  - a. If a living wage is not paid, the race will die out from slow starvation
  - b. Those getting less than a living wage have to be cared for by some form of public charity
4. It is far better to pay this cost directly through living wages than indirectly through charity
  - a. It is cheaper because physically efficient workmen produce more than the weak and unfit
  - b. It leads to a better type of citizenship
5. There are many precedents for this kind of legislation, all of which are regarded as socially justified
  - a. The state provides for a minimum of education for all its citizens
  - b. It provides for maximum hours of labor for women and children (a minimum of rest and recreation)
  - c. It provides for a minimum of safety for employees in dangerous trades
  - d. It provides for a minimum of health and sanitation for all employees

## IV. A minimum wage is practicable in operation

1. Each state may appoint a commission of nonpartisan experts, with wage boards for each industry
  - a. Each board may be composed of representatives of the employer, the employees, and of the outside public
  - b. Each board, after investigation of the conditions of employment and of living in the industry, may recommend to the state commission a minimum wage high enough to maintain the laborer in a state of physical efficiency
  - c. The state commission may then ratify or reject the recommendation

2. The wage fixed could be enforced
  - a. The employer who offered less than the minimum wage would not succeed in obtaining workmen unless there were a surplus of workmen
  - b. In case of a surplus of laborers, such employers as offered less than a minimum wage would be reported by the laborers themselves to the wage boards
  - c. These employers could be subjected to fines greater than the wage difference in question
3. The minimum wage has proved successful in operation
  - a. It has been in force in Australia and New Zealand for a period of fifteen years
    - (1) Both employer and employees are in favor of the system
    - (2) It has been extended from time to time until it now covers most of the trades of the country
  - b. It has been in operation in England for a period of four years
    - (1) There has been no difficulty in enforcement and no agitation for its repeal
    - (2) It has been extended recently to many new trades
  - c. The minimum wage has been adopted for women and minors in seven different states in this country

#### *Conclusion*

- I. Great numbers of unskilled workmen are getting wages insufficient to maintain them in a state of physical efficiency
- II. The result is race deterioration
- III. Low wages are due not to lack of productiveness but to ineffective bargaining power
- IV. A minimum wage will result in a real increase of wages for the unskilled
- V. It is theoretically sound in principle
- VI. It is practicable in operation

*Therefore* : The states should establish schedules of minimum wages for unskilled workmen, constitutionality conceded.

## NEGATIVE BRIEF

*Introduction*

- I. Laws which attempt to improve the lot of suffering humanity always arouse the deepest sympathy
- II. If sympathy, however, causes forgetfulness of common sense, the result will be disastrous for those who should be helped
- III. The establishment of a minimum wage is a revolutionary measure
  1. It strikes at the heart of the individualistic system of society on which modern progress has been built
  2. It attempts by law to set aside the free play of economic forces
- IV. This proposition should therefore be analyzed with the greatest care before it is adopted
- V. The minimum wage is opposed on four fundamental grounds
  1. It could not be enforced
  2. It could not succeed in bettering the conditions of the masses even were it on the statute books
  3. It would, on the contrary, have positively harmful results
  4. There is another and effective means of raising the standard of living of the unskilled workmen

*Proof*

- I. It could not be enforced
  1. There are nine million unskilled workmen in the United States for seven million jobs. They cannot all get work, and those left out would offer secretly to work for less than the minimum wage
  2. The employer makes larger profits with low wages, and he would therefore refuse to pay the minimum if he could get laborers for less
    - a. This has been proved by the experience of Australia
  3. Attempts to prevent secret underpaying would be fruitless
    - a. An officer of the law would have to be present at the making of each agreement between worker and employer

- b. Each pay envelope would have to be inspected by an officer
    - c. If a deficit were thus discovered, it would be necessary to prove the following points:
      - (1) That the worker had not taken time off during the week
      - (2) That he had not incurred some penalty or charge for breakage, etc.
- 4. The establishment and enforcement of wage schedules for forty-eight separate states would prove impossible
  - a. States having no minimum wages would attract industries from other states
    - (1) Industries based on natural resources would not shift from state to state
    - (2) Industries with large amounts of fixed capital would not readily shift
    - (3) There is a large amount of fluid capital which does flow to towns and states which offer inducements
  - b. If capital is driven out of a state or made unprofitable in the state, employment is necessarily reduced and wages lowered
  - c. The states would therefore compete for capital by fixing minimum wages so low as to be useless to the laborer
- 5. It is impossible to get a fair basis for a minimum wage
  - a. If based on the standard of living of immigrant labor, it would be so low as to be of no benefit to the American laborer
  - b. If based on a reasonable American standard of living, it would necessitate raising the mass of immigrant labor to our standard of living
    - (1) This would be uneconomic because of the low efficiency of the immigrant
    - (2) It would greatly increase immigration
  - c. The standard of living is largely a psychological matter
    - (1) The luxuries of yesterday are the necessities of to-day

- (2) Human beings are always desirous of more
- (3) Fifteen dollars a week may be enough to live on this year, but if wages may be fixed by the state, twenty dollars a week would next year become the indispensable minimum

II. It could not succeed in bettering the condition of the masses even were it on the statute books

- 1. Wages are determined by supply and demand for laborers
  - a. If supply is small relative to demand, wages will be high
    - (1) After the Black Death had swept away a large portion of the laboring class in England, wages rose to an unprecedented height
    - (2) The high wages of household servants at the present time are due to the small supply
  - b. If supply is large relative to demand, wages will be low
    - (1) This is the case in China and India
    - (2) There are conspicuous examples close at hand
      - (a) The supply of young lawyers is so great that their beginning wages are ten dollars a week
      - (b) The supply of shop girls is so great that their wages are a mere pittance

2. A minimum wage would neither increase the demand for, nor reduce the supply of, labor and hence could not increase wages

III. The minimum wage would have positively harmful results

- 1. It would raise prices of commodities
  - a. It is only the exceptional producer who could stand a reduction in profits
  - b. The average employer gets barely enough profits to remain in business
  - c. An increase in wages would do either of two things:
    - (1) Force the average employer to the wall
    - (2) Compel a rise in prices
  - d. We must assume the latter, for the first would be fatal to both employer and worker
- 2. A raise in price results a reduction in demand for the commodity

- a. Higher prices cause reduction of output
    - b. Reduction of output causes decrease in demand for labor
  - 3. Low wages are better than unemployment and no wages at all
- IV. There is another and effective means of raising the standard of living of the unskilled
  - 1. The cause of low wages in the United States is an oversupply of labor
    - a. The United States census shows that there is the equivalent of 9,000,000 men competing for 7,000,000 jobs
    - b. Twenty-two per cent of our population is out of employment for at least a portion of every year
    - c. In the city of Chicago alone there are more than 100,000 unemployed to-day
    - d. Men out of work constantly underbid those in work and force wages down
  - 2. This oversupply of labor is due to immigration
    - a. Before 1880, immigration to the United States was mainly from northern Europe
      - (1) The immigrants were industrious, thrifty people and of limited numbers
      - (2) They spread out over a sparsely settled country and were readily absorbed
    - b. In recent years a flood of immigration has set in from southern and southeastern Europe
      - (1) Nearly 10,000,000 have come since 1900 — about 10 per cent of our total population
        - (a) They are mainly adults with a great preponderance of men and constitute roughly 35 per cent of our total working population
        - (b) They rear large families, and in consequence the increase of the immigrant class is very rapid
      - (2) They congregate in industrial centers to such an extent that unskilled labor is a drug on the market

3. A law restricting immigration would reduce the supply of labor
  - a. Such a law is justifiable, as developed in the investigations of the Immigration Commission
    - (1) These laborers no longer come to find an asylum in this country, but merely for economic gain
    - (2) The social consequences are so serious as to break down the old idea that America is bound to open its doors for the people of other countries
  - b. Such a law is probable in the near future
    - (1) A restrictive measure passed both houses of the last session of Congress and barely failed of passage over the President's veto
    - (2) A bill of the same sort is to be introduced into the present Congress, and opposition is even weaker than two years ago
4. Restriction of immigration will not at once raise the unskilled to the heights of affluence
  - a. There is no short cut to prosperity
  - b. Restriction of immigration will, however, gradually raise wages. When labor is no longer a drug on the market, wages will advance

#### *Conclusion*

- I. The minimum wage cannot be enforced
- II. Even if it could be enacted, it would nevertheless fail to raise the standard of living of the laboring classes
- III. It would on the contrary be detrimental to the laboring classes by increasing unemployment
- IV. The remedy for low wages lies in restriction of immigration

*Therefore:* The states should not establish schedules of minimum wages for unskilled workmen, constitutionality conceded.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRIEF

It is evident that a completed brief is no mean product in the mere matter of bulk. To the inexperienced it seems at first glance that the only steps necessary to transform it

into a full-fledged argument are to interpolate an occasional *for* or *because*, recopy in solid paragraph form, and let it go at that. The resultant product, however, would be anything but effective, for it would be intolerably monotonous in form and dessicated in subject matter. Except in theory almost no attention has yet been paid here to the problem of persuasion. So far, the reader or hearer has been regarded largely as a disembodied intellect. Now he must be skillfully beguiled into attention by the sheer interest of the concrete details. For the average theme writer, it is task enough for one assignment to develop in full a single main division of a well-conceived brief. The relationship between the brief and the final stage of the completed argument will appear in the following parallel :

I. The minimum wage for unskilled workmen is justifiable	In advocating a minimum wage for unskilled workmen, it becomes our first duty to show the justification for such a measure. The task is not difficult. In 1911 Commissioner of Labor Neil made a report on laboring conditions in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and found that 7000 woolen-mill employees, working full time, received a wage of less than \$7 a week. The Senate Investigating Committee reports that 65 per cent of the women and girls in department stores and factories in this country receive a wage of less than \$8 a week. The Immigration Commission finds that 97 per cent of the men engaged in the steel and iron industries receive a wage of
1. Millions of unskilled laborers are getting wages too low to maintain their physical efficiency	

about \$400 a year. Mr. Streightoff, in his book "The Standard of Living in the United States," tells us that 92,535 grown men are earning less than \$3 a week, or \$150 a year; that 338,635 are earning less than \$5 a week, or \$250 a year; that 1,116,199 are earning less than \$10 a week, or \$500 a year. Scott Nearing, in his book on "Wages in the United States," tells us that one half of the adult males — not women or children, but full-grown men — are receiving a wage of less than \$500 a year, or less than \$10 a week.

- a.* This threatens ultimately a deterioration of the race

•

- b.* We are paying through charity and public

Although a great many are receiving wages of only \$3, \$4, \$5, and \$6 a week, in order to be extremely conservative let us take the figure of \$10 a week. Ladies and gentlemen, you know how far \$10 a week will go in supporting a family of four, with the cost of living at its present high point. It is impossible on \$10 a week to house, clothe, and feed a family in a way that permits a retention of physical vigor. The result is slow starvation, unless the women and children are forced from home and compelled to compete with their husbands and fathers in the mines, mills, and factories.

I need not picture to you the misery and suffering that these

institutions for the care of the resultant poor, diseased, and criminal

people endure. I need not tell you that our poorhouses, our insane asylums, our hospitals, our jails, are largely recruited from the ranks of the underpaid. I need not admonish you that these people are the present and the future citizens of this nation; that these girls who toil long hours in the factories and mills are the mothers of the sons and daughters of to-morrow, and that whether we are to have a race of stalwart men and women or a race of anæmic, emaciated weaklings depends upon the standard of living which the unskilled workmen are able to maintain.

2. This condition of the masses is not due to inadequate production of commodities
  - a. The per capita wealth of the country has tremendously increased during the past fifty years
  - b. The rich are accumulating unprecedented fortunes

When nearly one half of our working population is receiving less than living wages, there must be something wrong with our wage system. For this condition is not due to a lack of productivity on the part of the American people. The United States is not poverty-stricken. We have had an accumulation of wealth that is almost miraculous. The total wealth of our nation has increased from \$7,000,000,000 in 1850 to \$107,000,000,000 in 1912. This means a per capita increase from \$307 to more than \$1300. The returns from industrial enterprises are almost unbelievable. In 1911 Mr. Conant, our Commissioner of Corporations, reported that the earnings of the Harvester Company

in Chicago for the previous year were at the rate of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. It was testified in Chicago last year that the earnings on common stock of the Sears-Roebuck Company for 1911 were over \$7,000,000, or about 16 per cent. A year before the dissolution of the tobacco trust, the earnings of that corporation on its common stock were at the rate of 64 per cent. The eleventh annual report of the U. S. Steel Corporation shows that in the last ten years that company has disbursed over \$700,000,000 to its stockholders, in excess of a fair return upon its stock.

- c. The annual output of goods has increased enormously because of progress in the technique of industry

We have also had a tremendous increase in production. Inventions of efficient machinery, specialization, and large-scale operations have increased production a hundredfold during the past fifty years. Yet the condition of the unskilled workman has improved but little. Millions of the workers of this country live in conditions which render them physically inefficient and fail to insure them any of the recreations and enjoyments of life. When despite this tremendous increase in production, despite this great increase in prosperity, despite this miraculous wealth accumulation, the "submerged tenth" still persists, we repeat that there must be something wrong with our wage system.

3. It is due to the unequal bargaining power of laborers and employers

a. The laborer has but little knowledge of market conditions

b. The laborer cannot wait. Immediate work is imperative

c. The congestion of labor requires the applicant to accept work on such terms as he can get

The affirmative believes that unskilled labor is not getting its fair share of the product to which it contributes. Under present conditions the wage which unskilled labor receives is determined not by the productiveness of the laborer but by the relative bargaining strength of the employer and the employee. Under competitive conditions the bargaining strength of the employer is greater than that of the individual worker, because, first, the employer has a greater knowledge of the conditions of the labor market than the poor, uneducated, and in many cases foreign workers; second, the employer has less at stake in bargaining with the worker, for, at most, if he does not make a contract with the employee, it is a question of a day's profits with him; but if the worker does not succeed in making a contract with the employer, it may be a question of life or death. A man with an empty stomach and starving wife and children is surely not in an equal bargaining position with the rich and secure employer; third, there is congestion of labor in the industrial centers of the country, and the worker knows that if he does not take the job on the terms offered him, some one else will. Every morning at the stockyards or at the steel mills

there is a long line of eager men waiting for a job. These act as a club on each other, forcing the worker to take what the employer offers. The competitive strength of the labor group is ultimately equal only to the competitive strength of its weakest member.

Under competitive conditions, moreover, the employer, however desirous of treating his laborers fairly, is forced by the stress of competition to exercise his superior bargaining strength against the employee. The desire for cheap goods by the consumer is transmitted back from the consumer to the retailer, to the wholesaler, and to the producer. Some employers, to meet this demand and enlarge their sales, force down wages, and their competitors are then driven to the same practice. The productivity of the laborer, therefore, has nothing to do with his wages. They are determined by the employer, who is the stronger party to the wage contract.

*d. Organized laborers, who have equal bargaining power with employers, secure higher wages without increase of productivity*  
(i) *Teamsters of Chicago thus*

That this is true is evidenced by the fact that labor has been able to receive higher wages where it has been able to organize and bargain on more equal terms. Take the case of the teamsters of Chicago, who were receiving a wage of 20 cents an hour when unorganized and in an inferior bargaining position. When organized

raised wages from 20 to 25 cents an hour andable to bargain effectively, they received a wage of 25 cents an hour; yet both before and after the increase they were worth just the same to the employer. The waitresses, unorganized and in an inferior bargaining position, received a wage of \$6 a week, but when organized and able to bargain on more equal terms, they secured a wage of \$9 a week. In either case their services were of the same value to the employer. The shoe cutters in the Walkover Shoe Company of Brockton, Massachusetts, when unorganized and in a weak bargaining position, received a wage of \$7 a week; organized, they received a wage of \$10 a week. Their productiveness had not been increased. In 1904 the unskilled laborers in the stockyards of Chicago were receiving a wage of 15 cents an hour. When they succeeded in organizing a union, they raised their wages to  $17\frac{1}{2}$  cents an hour. But with the disintegration of the union, despite the ever-increasing cost of living, their wages have again been reduced to 15 cents an hour. But their worth to the employer has neither increased nor diminished. It is bargaining strength alone that determines wages.

(2) Waitresses in Chicago raised wages from \$6 to \$9 a week

(3) Shoe cutters in city of Brockton raised wages from \$7 to \$10 a week

(4) Stockyards laborers in Chicago, when their union failed, suffered a reduction in wages from  $17\frac{1}{2}$  to 15 cents an hour

## II. INFORMAL ARGUMENT

## FORMAL AND INFORMAL ARGUMENT COMPARED

In turning to informal argumentative writing, it should be said at the outset that all effective argument is based on the processes just detailed, and that all matter subject to argument may be dealt with formally or informally. Informal argument is therefore not a lower order of composition, nor is it confined to casual or frivolous subjects. The essential difference is that informality is the trait of normal, daily self-expression, while the highly technical method of the debate or thesis is reserved for state occasions. Informal argument is possible and frequent at the dinner table, in the street car, and over the counter. It has its place in the pages of the newspaper and of every weekly, monthly, or quarterly periodical which does not confine its contents to verse and fiction. It attempts to convince and persuade, but it is—or should be—simple and unpretentious in plan and free from dogmatism and belligerency in tone.

There is no need of expounding anew the principles of argumentation, which we have seen to be nothing more than the principles of all theme construction. Only those aspects of argument which are peculiar to the more informal types need once more to be discussed. The thrashing out of a difference of opinion, particularly in conversation, emphasizes the fact that of all forms of discourse argument is most personal. In fact, it does not live up to its own requirements unless it keeps ever in mind the dissenting opinion of the individual or the group who are addressed. In one other aspect informal argument is usually distinguished—in the

vast majority of cases it looks forward rather than back, for as a rule it is concerned with matters of policy and, therefore, with what is to be done in the future.

#### HAVING AN AGREEMENT AS TO TERMS AND ISSUES

Stripped of its formalities, there is great danger that informal discussion will neglect what the brief for debate always attends to with especial care, and that is the establishment of a clear understanding with "the other fellow." This is necessary, first of all, as to terms, though definition (already dwelt upon in connection with exposition and debate) must be insinuated into this sort of argument with the least possible ostentation. The aim is not so much to have a working basis for discussion as to avoid bungling disagreement about what is being discussed. In other words it is a negative process and ought not to be too much stressed. Any labels, any pedantic assertions about what "I propose to convey" or "the meaning to which I intend to restrict myself," should be avoided like the blight. Again, and with a similar lack of flourish, a common understanding should be secured not only as to terms but as to the issue. Usually in a brief essay or a friendly conversation one point is at issue and only one, but a discussion may become long, heated, and fruitless if the contending parties are talking to different points; and a light essay may be as goalless as a treadmill if the writer confuses his issues. Provision for these two matters leads naturally to the maintenance of theme unity, or keeping to the question. And the general construction of an informal argument with such a single purpose is comparable to that of any simple exposition or to that of one main division of a developed brief.

**EXERCISE**

Examine and analyze the following illustrations of informal argumentation. Answer the following questions with reference to each one: What assertion is supposed to be proved? Does this depend upon one or more than one main point? Is any irrelevant material included? Is there any confusion of issues? Are there any false inferences?

1. I don't believe in holding final examinations in college composition courses. You are asked for a lot of facts that don't prove whether or no you can write; and you are all wrought up because you are in the midst of a whole series of examinations at the end of a tiresome Quarter. And if you don't know the answers to the questions, you may not be as ignorant as you seem. The case is quite different with spelling or mental arithmetic. The idea of representing either your knowledge or ability by three hours writing in a crowded, unventilated classroom is absurd anyway.

2. The honor system in examinations ought to be adopted at \_\_\_\_\_ College. Having the instructor sit like a policeman while the examination is going on is a sort of mockery, for his being there tempts people to cheat, and yet he really does not make a business of stopping them. It's too like school ways of doing things. The standard of honor is higher in a college. Public opinion is strong enough to take care of the situation, and public opinion is on the right side at \_\_\_\_\_. If it is n't, it ought to be. The system has operated well at the University of Virginia for years, and if that is the case it ought to work equally well in Maine or Oregon or Texas.

3. "It's very hard," said my mother, "that in my own house —" . . . "it's very hard that in *your* own house I may not have a word to say about domestic matters. I am sure I managed well enough before we were married. There's evidence," said my mother sobbing; "ask Peggotty if I didn't do very well when I was n't interfered with!"

"Edward," said Miss Murdstone, "let there be an end of this. I go to-morrow." . . .

"I am sure," my poor mother went on at a grievous disadvantage, and with many tears, "I don't want anybody to go. I should be

very miserable and unhappy if anybody was to go. I don't ask much. I am not unreasonable. I only want to be consulted sometimes. I am very much obliged to anybody who assists me, and I only want to be consulted as a mere form, sometimes. I thought you were pleased, once, with my being a little inexperienced and girlish, Edward—I am sure you said so—but you seem to hate me for it now, you are so severe."—CHARLES DICKENS, "David Copperfield"

4. I remember a touch of conscience in this kind at school. My good old aunt . . . had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school . . . a grey-headed old beggar saluted me. . . . I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, . . . schoolboy-like, I made him a present of — the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I had eaten it — . . . — and what should I say to her the next time I saw her — how naughty I was to part with her pretty present! — and the odor of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, . . . and I blamed my impudent spirit of alms-giving; and out-of-place hypocrisy of goodness. —CHARLES LAMB, "A Dissertation upon Roast Pig"

5. "Better not, better not, Joshua. Let evil words die as soon as they're spoken. Will Maskery might be a great deal worse fellow than he is. He used to be a wild drunken rascal, neglecting his work and beating his wife, they told me; now he's thrifty and decent, and he and his wife look comfortable together. If you can bring me any proof that he interferes with his neighbors, and creates any disturbance, I shall think it my duty as a clergyman and a magistrate to interfere. But it would n't become wise people, like you and me, to be making a fuss about trifles, as if we thought the Church was in danger because Will Maskery lets his tongue wag rather foolishly. . . . We must 'live and let live,' Joshua, in religion as well as in other things."—GEORGE ELIOT, "Adam Bede"

6. "Excuse me, Mr. Lyon; I've had all that out with my mother, and I may as well save you any trouble by telling you that my mind has been made up about that a long while ago. I'll take no employment that obliges me to prop up my chin with a high cravat, and wear straps, and pass the livelong day with a set of fellows who spend their spare money on shirt-pins. That sort of work is really lower than many handicrafts; it only happens to be paid out of proportion. That's why I set myself to learn the watch-making trade. My father was a weaver first of all. . . . I belong to — people who don't follow the fashions." . . .

"Oh yes, your ringed and scented men of the people! — I won't be one of them. Let a man once throttle himself with a satin stock and he'll get new wants and new motives. Metamorphosis will have begun at his neck joint, and it will go on till it has changed his likings first and then his reasoning, which will follow his likings as the feet of a hungry dog will follow his nose. I'll have none of your clerky gentility. I might end by collecting greasy pence, from poor men to buy myself a fine coat and a glutton's dinner, on pretense of serving the poor men. I'd sooner be Paley's fat pigeon than a demagogue all tongue and stomach, though" — here Felix changed his voice a little — "I should like well enough to be another sort of demagogue, if I could." — **GEORGE ELIOT**, "Felix Holt"

#### SUBJECTS OPEN TO INFORMAL ARGUMENT

**Matters of personal interest.** It has been said that all matter subject to argument may be dealt with formally or informally. Yet by a natural process of selection many subjects may be found which lend themselves most naturally to informal discussion. Considered as a progressive series, the simplest type may be designated as matters of personal interest. Examples of this sort of argument are common with reference to matters of expenditure, of amusements, of choice of college, of the adoption of styles of dress, of the selection of books. The discussion of this sort of topic is limited almost entirely to the family or to speakers of intimate relationship,

between whom the problems of an individual are interesting enough to be talked over at some length.

**Matters of group interest.** Next in the series of subjects for argumentation are the matters of group interest. There is almost no kind of social, religious, or political organization in which questions of policy must not frequently be discussed. If the members of a church decide that their building should be enlarged or that a new one should be erected ; if the local improvement association determines to expend more money or to expend its money in a different way ; if a social settlement decides upon the raising of funds by a specific method — all of these decisions are reached, unless by the miracle of immediate and unanimous consent, through argument as to policy. The treatment of these steps is apt to be fairly consecutive and to take shape in short speeches or even in printed reports of officers of such organizations. Sometimes, even, — if the subject in hand, though of definite interest to a single group, have also a general significance, — material of this sort may find its way into the periodicals.

**Matters of public interest.** More substantial yet, but still subject to informal argument, are matters of public interest. These furnish a large proportion of the articles treated in the essay side of such periodicals as the *Forum*, the *North American Review*, the *Nation* — and, in some measure, of *McClure's* and the *American*, of *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and the *Century* — and of the editorial pages of the weekly periodicals. These discussions seldom attempt to exhaust the possibilities of a question, but limit themselves to some one or two definite phases clearly and briskly developed. All educational, industrial, economic, or political questions which are related to public policy fall in this group.

**Matters of general speculative interest.** Last in the series are matters of general speculative interest. Just as matters of personal concern are perhaps too limited in quality to deserve elaborate and final treatment, these matters of general speculation are too extensive to be cooped up in a brief. It is a matter of general speculative interest as to whether the loss of American nerve is due to the new system of school coddling. It is distinctly worth talking about. And yet it is so far from possible to prove this in any final fashion, or even to prove to general satisfaction that there is a loss of American nerve or that the schools coddle, that the methods of formal argumentation would quite defeat themselves. So with general questions as to art, literature, ethics, religion, and certain of the deeper meanings of social institutions, it is profitable to talk tentatively and fruitless to speak with any pretense of finality. For this reason informal argument relies upon brief allusion rather than upon the presentation of detailed and elaborated citations of authority, and it is for this reason that informal argument attempts rather to present a phase than to exhaust all the possibilities of a question.

Argumentative writing, therefore, in contrast to argumentation, is on the border line of exposition. In its processes it is chiefly expository, with occasional resorts to persuasion. In its outline, though it deals with debatable material, it is correspondingly uncomplicated. The point may be made clear by contrast between the two briefs in the earlier part of the chapter and the following acceptable plan for an informal argument upon a matter of general speculative interest.

## WHY GOOD DRAMA IS A BAD BUSINESS PROPOSITION

*Introduction*

According to Bernard Shaw, real cause of failure of plays is the lack of "capacity for serious drama of thousands of playgoers of all classes"

*Body*

- I. Shaw's explanation not true of United States
  - I. There are countless clubs for the study of serious plays, the existence of which shows that the people have a capacity for serious drama
- II. Real cause for failure of good plays lies in the box office
  - I. Prohibitive prices are demanded for seats
    - a. Real culture is found in middle and lower classes
    - b. Gallery seats have lost their respectability
      - (1) A successful play must fill the gallery
    - c. Moving-picture shows and cheap vaudeville houses are dangerous competitors
      - (1) Poorer classes need recreation; they go to the "movies" at "ten, twenty, and thirty" as the only thing within their means
  2. Drama leagues, lectures, and study courses take the place, at less expense, of the actual seeing of the plays
  3. The rich prefer musical comedy and "amusing" plays

*Conclusion*

Hence, the good drama, like certain kinds of expensive books, can seldom be made to pay.

It is hardly necessary to supply specific topics for argumentative treatment. If the foregoing paragraphs are read and compared with the pages in Chapter I on representation of fact and interpretation of fact, the subjects listed there will suggest debatable topics which may be derived from them. The subjects in the second group, numbers 11-26, are all open to argumentative treatment (see pp. 19-21).

## THE TONE OF INFORMAL ARGUMENT

Finally, as to the tone of informal argument, we must return to the code of exposition. The direct and aggressive earnestness of the debater is well enough in its place, but it must keep its place. Informal argument must be affable, modest, nonassertive. The gist of the whole matter is summed up by Benjamin Franklin. In his "Autobiography" he tells of how, after years of embarrassing people by the use of the Socratic method, he

gradually left it, retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence; never using, when I advanced anything that may possibly be disputed, the words *certainly*, *undoubtedly*, or any others that give the air of positiveness to an opinion; but rather say, I conceive or apprehend a thing to be so and so; it appears to me, or *I should think it so and so*, for such and such reasons; or *I imagine it to be so*; or *it is so, if I am not mistaken*. This habit, I believe, has been of great advantage to me when I have had occasion to inculcate my opinions, and persuade men into measures that I have been from time to time engaged in promoting; and, as the chief ends of conversation are to *inform* or to be *informed*, to *please* or to *persuade*, I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive assuming manner, that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat every one of those purposes for which speech was given to us, to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure.

## CHAPTER X

### **DESCRIPTION**

*Place of description in student work.*

*Principles governing description.* Selection of subject matter. Selection of effective details. Selection of a point. Selection of a point of view. Length of descriptions. Directness of attack.

*Types of subject matter.* Inanimate objects at rest. Inanimate objects in motion. Animal life. Human subject matter.

### **PLACE OF DESCRIPTION IN STUDENT WORK**

To turn to description is to resort to the second pair of forms of discourse, different from argument and exposition in many aspects (see pp. 204-207). Not only are the types themselves distinct from those which have preceded, but the method of approach is equally different. Expository and (in some degree) argumentative writing are necessary to every college student in the performance of his regular work. He represents himself in courses where special papers are needed, which fall for the most part under the head of exposition. It is therefore no more than right that a special effort should be somewhere made in a college course to prepare him to do his best work in presenting on paper what he has learned and thought.

No student, however, is under a similar obligation to use description or narration. He does not, therefore, need similar preparation. Furthermore, even if he did, these two forms are to so much higher a degree dependent upon artistic

quality that to only a select minority of students who work patiently and at great length could productive instruction be given. The use, therefore, in doing any class work in description and narration is in making better readers and more appreciative critics of literature out of the people who are practicing in these forms. By studying the methods used in standard fiction and by applying them in a variety of short studies, a degree of discrimination may be cultivated which no amount of theoretical lecture work could develop.

#### PRINCIPLES GOVERNING DESCRIPTION

**Selection of subject matter.** Not all subjects lend themselves to description with anything like equal readiness ; yet unfortunately, where description is undertaken for practice purposes, the mind of the student is apt to resort to the unavailable extremes almost as much as to subject matter in the middle zone, which is well adapted to descriptive treatment.

*Temptation to use extraordinary material.* The first inclination of one who is asked to write a description is, in the majority of cases, to resort to subjects which are somewhat extravagant and hence easy to handle. The man or woman who is unused to self-expression seizes eagerly on extraordinary or fantastic subjects. He would choose a sunset, a view of the Grand Cañon of Arizona or Pike's Peak, an express train at full speed, the noisy progress of a metropolitan fire crew. If he is choosing animal subjects, he is apt to resort to the zoölogical garden, or if describing human subjects, to choose the grotesque types which by no means overcrowd Dickens's pages, but which are the most impressive to the reader. If asked to describe a person under stress of feeling,

he is inclined to subject him to paroxysms of anger, pain, or fear or else to ecstasies of enjoyment. The inclination to select such emphatic material is a natural one. It is due to the fact that these extraordinary images are the first to appear to the mind's eye and the most vivid in recollection. For the very reason that they are vivid, they are comparatively easy to describe, and the task of describing them therefore yields a minimum of either artistic or critical discipline.

*Rejection of hopeless commonplace.* The amateur who is warned only against the adoption of such descriptive raw material is often inclined to resort to the opposite extreme and to attempt subjects so stale, flat, and unprofitable that they are practically undescribable. When the seasoned theme reader comes to certain of these subjects, he has a mournful advance consciousness of the kind of thing he is about to read. "My Ink Well," "A Morris Chair," "The Parlor Lamp," "A Box of Chalk," "An Opal Ring"—these are almost impossible to describe with any effect, for the reason that they have no quality which lends itself to description. These types of simple object, undistinguished in any way, are often so simple that the mere mention of them is all-sufficient. As with certain of the simplest and most prosaic descriptive terms like *vulgar* or *manly* or *mean*, there is no need of attempting to refine upon them.

Of course the most ordinary subject matter can be made significant both in painting and description by putting it under extraordinary circumstances. The world is transformed at every twilight and then again as complete darkness settles down. Friends and intimates seem altogether unfamiliar when placed in social surroundings which do not fit them; and so, by a change in the conditions under which they are found,

these simplest of subjects may be made vividly significant. A footprint on the sands has been made a commonplace of the most familiar sort by virtue of the oft-repeated line from Longfellow, but when Robinson Crusoe discovered one, prosaic as such a print is in a general way, it marked one of the most thrilling moments in his long experience on the island. The warning here held out is against the description of commonplace subject matter under ordinary circumstances.

**Selection of effective details.** The cardinal principle in all artistic work is the principle of selection. The subject matter once selected, the principle must again be applied in the selection of detail. This has appeared in exposition in the necessity of choosing for the sake of both unity and emphasis those details which are pertinent and effective in bringing home the main points of the subject expounded. In argumentation it has appeared in the necessity of selecting what would best prove the point in hand, what arguments of the opposition should be refuted and what contentions conceded. In description, as in definition, the principle of selection is again of great importance. The only description that describes is the description that lays main stress on the unique features of the subject under treatment. A given city street crossing may be fronted by four brick buildings, slate-roofed, many-windowed, and of equal height. To mention these facts and to elaborate them in any detail is of small moment, but the continued stream of motor cars and vehicles, the coming and going of men of a professional type and of women in nurses' garb, the odors which at times are associated with the operating room, and the cross rising above the highest gable will mark one as a hospital conducted under religious auspices; the flood of boys in and around the second at

certain times of the day will show it to be a school ; the roar of riveting and iron working, together with the exhibits in the window, will show that the third is a stove factory, and certain evidences distinguish the fourth as a wholesale harness and carriage shop. These are the features on which description will linger and lay stress. It may be true of five residences in a single row that they are all brick, slate-roofed and vine-clad, but conscious observation, or merely the recollection of those who have the observant eye, will show that one is large and box-shaped, another of an English type and completely shrouded in vines, the third distinguished by the amount of the white painted wood trimmings and the character of the entrance, the fourth by its dominating great windows, and the last by the odd appearance, caused by the distribution of the windows, of a human face peering above the ground level. In the description of human subject matter, it is never worth while to comment on the features or limbs unless there is something extraordinary about them. A single distinguishing feature may give the key to a whole description. Charles Dickens's Panks in " Little Dorrit " was quite ordinary to look at, but his peculiar trick of puffing like a little tug lingers in the memory of anyone who has made his acquaintance.

**Selection of a point.** It is no less true of description than of the preceding forms of discourse that a definite point should be adopted for each piece of descriptive work. This matter has already been touched upon in the mention of the distinguishing features of any subject matter, but such a mention in itself is hardly enough, as prose description is practically never written except as a supplement to narration. The point of a prose description of a man, of a building, a scene, always needs to take its special cue from the relation

which it bears to the immediate part of the story and to the general story to which it belongs. Panks is described as puffing like a tugboat, because in that simile is best implied the effective busyness of the man in carrying out his little transactions. Uriah Heep is made to pass through his characteristic contortions because by them is suggested the mock humility which the reader is never allowed to forget. Mr. Micawber's pompous verbosity, Mr. Pecksniff's hypocritical moralizations, Mr. Gradgrind's insistence upon facts, are all of them introduced in early descriptions of these worthies in order that phases of their character necessary to the development of the story should be brought home to the reader as soon as possible. If there were other interesting aspects of their characters, they were developed incidentally and later, and they threw light upon some special episode ; but in each case the point of the description was determined by the place of the description in the narrative as a whole.

**Selection of a point of view.** Another matter to be determined on in description as in exposition is the point of view. In both forms of discourse it is necessary, if a clear impression is to be made on the reader, that the attitude of mind of the writer be early defined. What does he think about the subject or the character under discussion ; what is his attitude toward the problem being treated ? If it is necessary to read a whole composition before finding out where the writer stands, the effect of the final discovery will be greatly impaired through the long delay. To return to " *David Copperfield*," one discovers early, and never forgets, the general feeling which Dickens has for David's mother, for the Murdstones, for Peggotty, Ham, little Emily, Steerforth, Rosa Dartle, and the rest of the people of the story.

Yet in description, the point of view must include not only the attitude of mind but the actual physical position of the describer in relation to the thing described. An account of objects seen from a mountain top should not include any detail which would not be perceptible from this remote point of view. In a recent and deservedly successful play, the author makes the mistake of specifying that Blackmore's "Lorna Doone" is lying on the property table. No spectator in the audience could detect this. It is a mistake, if a fixed point of view is adopted, to mention objects which could not be seen from a given place because of intervening things; as, for instance, the garden at the rear of a house when one describes it from the front walk.

A fixed point of view, however, is not essential to a description. Objects as seen by a passenger on a train or steamship, by one driving in a carriage, or by a pedestrian are, of course, legitimate subject matter for description. But in these cases the reader, in the fewest possible words, should be carried along with the spectator so that he realizes the shift that is taking place. It is evidently absurd in describing a residence to fall into the error of more than one theme writer and to describe the house as seen from the street, from the front walk, and then, when new details become apparent, to pass on to features of the second story, and by way of them to the main staircase and the entrance hall. This is unreasonable progression which no normal person would follow. The matter to be remembered in dealing with a shifting point of view is to handle the details in such a way that the description and the describer evidently move from point to point and do not slide or wobble. Descriptive equilibrium is a very important feature. To have the reader

guessing where he is and how he got there is to deprive him of any firm or complete idea of what is being described.

**Length of descriptions.** The question is frequently asked by students as to how long a description should be. Any answer as to length, however roughly general it is, could easily be confuted by appeal to examples from the literary classics. Scott used to open his novels with descriptive passages which frequently bulked up to a thousand words and more. Dickens and Thackeray used their differing material liberally, though without the splendid lavishness of Scott. In the Victorian novels the fashion established by these three was more or less closely followed. In George Meredith and Hardy descriptive passages of a page or two are frequently to be found, Meredith dealing at greater length with human subject matter and Hardy at greater length with nature scenes. In Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, and Galsworthy a degree of economy appears, and in general, among present-day writers, it may be said that the writers of romantic fiction are more liberal in description than the realists. In the meantime, the short story has sprung up, and within its narrow limits description is compressed to lowest terms. With only three or four thousand words at command, whatever description is given must be insinuated into the story with the least possible expenditure of space or time.

Thus, though an assertion as to the proper length for description, based on good authority, could vary all the way from "as long as you choose" to "as brief as possible," a dictum based upon the literature of the day, at least as far as fiction is concerned, would be safely within reason if it concluded that the tendency now is toward brevity of

description, through the influence of the shorter novel and the short story.<sup>1</sup>

**Directness of attack.** But not even the selection of proper subject matter or of discriminating detail will insure the success of a description. Though these processes are important, more vital than either of these is the use of suggestive treatment in the actual description. A simile is effective—Panks puffed like a little tug; but a bold metaphor, which assumes the similarity without labeling it, is more effective still (see pp. 61-64). The really receptive reader will always meet the writer more than half way, and in the demand which is laid on the reader and the coöperation with which this demand is usually met, the highest degree of descriptive effectiveness is usually reached.

A final word should be said in general before turning to specific problems of description, and that is, that the student is at first apt to forget that the work of description must be done definitely and without preliminary talk. The inclination of amateurs is to mention aspects of the thing described and then elaborately draw an inference from them. Instead of calling a building old and mentioning the evidences of its age, they incline to say that the style of architecture and the size of the vines, the overhanging majesty of the trees, and so on, all showed that the building was old. Instead of accumulating the evidences of neglect, they are apt to talk about neglect—to mention fallen walls, rotted woodwork, cracked

<sup>1</sup> An interesting though slight counter tendency is shown in the development of stage directions, which until recent years have been of the briefest, but which were expanded somewhat by Ibsen, and in the hands of Shaw, Brieux, and other moderns have been developed into vital elements of twentieth-century drama.

plastering, and so on, as proofs that a place had not been taken care of. The point is not to explain or expound the thing described, but to describe it and allow the exposition to come by inference. "His broad brow showed that he was a man of intellect"; "His massive form indicated his gigantic strength"—these are ways not to describe intellectual profundity and physical strength. As a matter of fact, they are in themselves often misleading. A man with a square foot of forehead or a gentleman who weighs three hundred pounds may be as stupid as an owl or as weak as a cat. A brief precept to carry in mind, which will lead to the avoidance of this kind of error, is, "Don't explain; describe."

#### TYPES OF SUBJECT MATTER

The simplest method of arriving at a sense of the abundant material and the varied methods of attack is to consider in turn the different classes of subject matter which lend themselves to description.

**Inanimate objects at rest.** The simplest material to deal with descriptively is inanimate objects at rest. If this term is used in its broadest sense, it will include objects in the sense in which physicists use the word *matter*. It will cover a wide range from a mountain to a sunset, a building to a piece of furniture. The range is bewildering in its immensity. This series of subjects as encountered in ordinary literature is described in a variety of aspects. A little analysis will show that these aspects will naturally fall into a simple classification and that an object of description may be approached so that emphasis is thrown almost exclusively in terms of one or another of them. These simple classifications would

include (1) color, light, and shade ; (2) form and dimension ; and (3) effects other than visible, namely, sound, touch, taste, and odor.

*Color, light, and shade.* A simple problem is the description of inanimate objects at rest in terms of color, light, and shade. This description, effective in itself, even though not often found to the exclusion of other details, offers a great variety of possibilities. Subject matter may be found not only in the sunset effects which first come to mind, brilliant patches of autumnal foliage, gay bits of garden, burning buildings, and so on, but also in descriptions of architecture, of city sky lines, of day and night scenes in cloud and rain, and of interiors and even individual objects which have real character in themselves. The element of color, light, and shade is a vital one in all objective description of nature and of animal and human life. It is of fundamental importance in this simplest material, which lends itself to many of the descriptive treatments which more complex subjects do not submit to. Many of the best effects are to be found in harmony of colors, and many others in a jangle of discordant hues. The most brilliant may be made brilliantly attractive, but many of the simplest have an inner value which is quite as great. In this connection, the opening sections of Emerson's "Essay on Nature" should be read by any who would first see and then describe. "Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration."

*Form and dimension.* Form and dimension are aspects of the same subject matter which may be described in terms of color, light, and shade. In literary treatment the two are

usually combined. Yet occasionally objects lend themselves with peculiar happiness to description almost exclusively in terms of size and shape. Confining the discussion still to inanimate objects at rest, certain buildings otherwise featureless are interesting on account of these details. Any manufactured object from a ship to a bed or a vase may, if unusual enough, lend itself to this treatment. "The physiognomy of streets" is often employed in fiction; and in nature the bolder aspects of scenery—wide expanse of sea or prairie or the tortuous windings of rivers as seen from on high—are all interesting in terms of form and dimension. It is evident from this brief beginning of a catalogue of available material that, as the subject demands, chief emphasis may be laid upon either variety or monotony.

The expressionless uniform twenty houses, all to be knocked at and rung at in the same form, all approachable by the same dull steps, all fended off by the same pattern of railing, all with the same impracticable fire-escapes, the same inconvenient fixtures in their heads, and everything without exception to be taken at a high valuation—who has not dined with these?—CHARLES DICKENS,  
"David Copperfield"

*Effects other than visible: sound, touch, taste, and odor.* It is almost impossible to dissociate the visible qualities of any object from the object itself. The sense which is most continually active, most extensive in its reach, and most aggressive in calling outer phenomena to our attention is the sense of sight. The sound of military music suggests the gaily uniformed band under circumstances most familiar to the hearer—seated in the pavilion, marching along the highway, or what not. The odor of a peach brings to mind at once the shadings from purple-red to yellow-white and the

bloom on its rough skin, as well as the firm softness of its mass. In the darkened interior of a house the feeling of a rug here, a threshold there, a newel post somewhere else, a turn of the stairs, may enable one who is familiar with it to make his way without the sense of sight, but with a sense of the visible surroundings through which in daylight he would be passing. Thus a description in terms of sense perceptions other than sight need not and cannot totally exclude from the reader's mind visual images; but it can be completely conveyed without any reference to them.

Occasionally in fiction the device is employed of giving a whole description in such terms. Seldom, however (and for this reason it is the better practice not to attempt it), does such a description exclude sound, which usually must be excluded in a description of inanimate things at rest. There is still plenty left for the ingenuity of the describer. The presence of an observer in a room or at a spot where some event has recently taken place, would give full sway for descriptive effects of this sort. The difference is obvious between a deserted ballroom and an empty banquet hall, between a side street in a flood-stricken town and the site of a recent conflagration, between awakening under a blossoming apple tree and in a hospital ward. Practice in attempting this type of description is the more effective, not because one would often resort to it alone but because it reveals the resources of descriptive material in other than visible effects. In the following, Poe has achieved results by the use merely of the sense of touch.

Upon standing erect, with this end in view, I found the undertaking even a more serious task than my fears had led me to imagine. On each side of a narrow passage rose a complete wall

of various heavy lumber, which the least blunder on my part might be the means of bringing down upon my head, or, if this accident did not occur, the path might be effectually blocked up against my return by the descending mass, as it was in front by the obstacle there. The crate itself was a long and unwieldy box, upon which no foothold could be obtained. In vain I attempted, by every means in my power, to reach the top, with the hope of being thus enabled to draw myself up. Had I succeeded in reaching it, it is certain that my strength would have proved utterly inadequate to the task of getting over, and it was better in every respect that I failed. At length, in a desperate effort to force the crate from its ground, I felt a strong vibration in the side next me. I thrust my hand eagerly to the edge of the planks, and found that a very large one was loose. With my pocket-knife, which, luckily, I had with me, I succeeded, after great labor, in prying it entirely off; and getting through the aperture, discovered, to my exceeding joy, that there were no boards on the opposite side—in other words, that the top was wanting, it being the bottom through which I had forced my way. I now met with no important difficulty in proceeding along the line until I finally reached the nail. With a beating heart I stood erect, and with a gentle touch pressed against the cover of the trap. — POE, "Narrative of A. Gordon Pym"

The kitchen was deathly quiet in contrast to the hubbub of the clattering dishes which had just died down. The great wave of heat from the range converted the room into a huge oven, and one could feel the steam rising from the still damp floor. In the air lingered the ghosts of the morning baking, the fruity apple-pie ghost, the sweet, spicy cooky ghosts, and the good, friendly bread ghosts, all with their suggestions of comfort and plenty. — (Student theme)

Darkness comes on rapidly; rather it seems to drop, softly, swiftly,—eager to bring refreshment to the exhausted day. A breeze swings in from the West, with a coolness that pricks, and a dampness that falls and clings like a shroud;—fragrant with the freshness of growing green things, cloying with the oppressive sweetness of odorous magnolias. Down by the river the frogs and crickets join in their evening chant, water ripples and laps against the shore, birds coo and caress in whispers, and there begins that

chorus of sounds that so curiously produce the musical silence of the night. —(Student theme)

To the onlooker, it appeared to be just an ordinary piece of one-inch hemp line, but to the two men in the *Pleasure* it was the source of both hope and pain. Hope, that through it they might be able to bring a body out of seventy feet of cold water, and pain, in the handling of its stiff strands, becoming stiffer and stiffer with each additional moment. At the end of fourteen hours of dragging, it felt like a badly worn steel cable with a surface like a porcupine's back, its rough, broken hemp threads cutting into two pair of water-soaked hands. At long intervals, a dead pull on the line would cause the dragman to shout to the engineer to throw out the clutch, and both men with numbed fingers would pull the cold leaden cable slowly into the boat, while the dripping water soaked their legs and the sharp wind chilled through to their very bones, doing all in its power to unnerve them for the sight soon to meet their gaze. —(Student theme)

*The effect upon the observer.* Just as a description can be brought home in terms of other than the visible details, so it can be made suggestively vivid without the elaboration of any details, simply through dwelling upon the effect of an object upon the observer. An obvious illustration is the feeling of insignificance before the most majestic of mountain scenes, or the sense of impotence in the presence of a great machine or as one sees an express train flash by. These extraordinary subjects, however, only illustrate what is true of very many descriptive subjects. To a certain degree they produce distinct emotional effects upon those who perceive them. The entrance to many rooms of different sorts — libraries, shops, railway waiting rooms, business offices, court rooms, and so on — each may bring home to the observer a definite mood. So also do outdoor scenes of various kinds, associated perhaps with prolonged experiences or with vivid or specific

on two wheels. The flash of the number, 13, that jumps out of the crowded blur and mist, startling, clear, tangible. A long narrow body, hugging close to the ground, a visored black figure crouched over the wheel, another behind facing the opposite direction,— and the thing is gone.—(Student theme)

**Animal life.** All the foregoing sorts of descriptive material are available in the treatment of animals or animal life, as well as the distinctly new descriptive fact that every animal worth describing has its individual character. The subjects instinctively chosen by inexperienced writers are as a rule commonplace and difficult or grotesque. Domestic cats and dogs, whether frisky or indolent, almost all behave in about the same way under given circumstances. The intelligent dog who tugs at his master's coat tails to warn him of imminent danger has been pretty well written out. Descriptions of strange animals to be found only in menageries give an opportunity for close observation, but they seldom find their way into any fiction, except as members of the same species, in romantic story, are encountered in the wilds. Now and then, as very notably in the stories of Galsworthy, the pet dog has his place. A dog, however, humanized, is used not so much for his own sake as to symbolize some peculiar phase of civilization.

Fritz regarded the severe forefinger, with his head on one side, mournfully. His soft brown eyes, always irresistible, filled with slow tears. A frown of perplexity, of distrust, of hurt dog feelings creased his forehead in a maze of adorable wrinkles. Suddenly he gave a bark of triumph. At last he understood; it was only a new game,—that short command,—that stern gesture. His body quivered and squirmed in pure delight, the dejected ears sprang into pert position, the stubby tail beat a riotous tattoo on the ground. He stopped in uncomfortable perplexity. So it was not a joke after all! His tail dropped despondently; his eyes melted once more into

tears; his ears flapped limply; his shrill bark trailed off into a pleading croon, — soft, insinuating, eloquent.—(Student theme)

Don took his seat in the saddle. He was scarcely settled before the outlaw gave a snort and a leap. Rising into the air with all four feet free from the earth, he stiffened his fore legs, humped his back into a V and landed, with head between his forelegs, as if made of wood. His eyes shone and glistened. His nostrils opened wide. Failing to free himself of his rider, he mustered all his strength and cunning. He rose again. This time while in the air he "changed ends," turning completely around, and so quickly that Don was thrown with terrific force to the earth. The horse walked away with his reputation as an outlaw inviolate and with challenge in his eye.—(Student theme)

**Human subject matter.** Human subject matter is naturally the most complex of all to treat. Every approach hitherto mentioned may be used in the description of an individual. In addition, characteristic motions or gestures, the varied expressions of the face, the voice and laugh, characteristic postures at rest and gait or carriage, the behavior under stress of different moods, and, finally, the character of the individual are all new features. Furthermore, human beings in combination, the composite character of groups, and their behavior under varying circumstances are all employed in fiction.

*External appearance at rest.* It is well for practice purposes to experiment at first merely with the human subject at rest, in the attempt to omit from studied treatment any of the more complex phases just mentioned. Without entering into motion, into degrees of self-expression, into details as to character, the human subject sitting or standing may be described as a spectacle uninterpreted. Not infrequently in fiction, minor characters are so introduced, and sometimes even characters of importance are first presented in wholly

objective fashion. An absurd but appropriate illustration is presented in Washington Irving's description of Wouter Van Twiller. After two paragraphs of explicit characterization, which is done in the mock-heroic vein of the entire "History of New York," Irving passes on to the description of "the person of this illustrious old gentleman" and up to the last two sentences refrains utterly from giving more than a physical presentation of the Governor's appearance.

He was exactly five feet and six inches in height, and six feet five inches in circumference. His head was a perfect sphere, and of such stupendous dimensions, that Dame Nature, with all her sex's ingenuity, would have been puzzled to construct a neck capable of supporting it: wherefore she wisely declined the attempt, and settled it firmly on the top of his backbone, just between the shoulders. His body was oblong and particularly capacious at bottom; which was wisely ordered by Providence, seeing that he was a man of sedentary habits, and very averse to the idle labor of walking. His legs were short, but sturdy in proportion to the weight they had to sustain; so that when erect he had not a little the appearance of a beer barrel on skids. His face, that infallible index of the mind, presented a vast expanse, unfurrowed by any of those lines and angles which disfigure the human countenance with what is termed expression. Two small gray eyes twinkled feebly in the midst, like two stars of lesser magnitude in a hazy firmament; and his full, red cheeks, which seemed to have taken toll of everything that went into his mouth, were curiously mottled and streaked with dusky red, like a Spitzemberg apple.

This is an illustration of treatment of the human subject in terms of form and dimension. It is needless to repeat that what has been said concerning color, light and shade, effects other than visible, effect upon the observer, and general descriptive terms, for the observations on these phases made in connection with inanimate objects may all be extended to apply to description of people.

He stood near the center of the platform, a tall slender man of thirty years or so. His form was bent and his chest hollow. The eyes were dark and keen. His face, thin and clean-shaven, was ghostly pale except for two bits of hectic flush high up in his cheeks. His chin was long and his jaws firm and square. A dense coat of black hair was closely plastered over his angular head. He wore a long black coat, "a world too wide for his shrunk" shoulders; a very tall collar and a white tie carefully laundered but carelessly tied. With one of his white bony hands he grasped the edge of the pulpit; with the other he was pointing to the ceiling. — (Student theme)

He sat motionless in his practical desk chair with his books and papers and telephones before him. His dark-gray business suit was clean and new, but at present it was sadly crumpled as he leaned back in his chair and gazed out of the window. His feet were crossed, with one toe barely touching the floor. His hair, still thick and wavy, was touched with gray. Only in spots could one see the original dark-brown color. His face was tanned and deeply lined. His brow showed unmistakable marks of a frequent frown, while around his mouth, as though in contradiction, were the short curved lines of the habitual smiler. The glance of his big brown eyes never wavered, looking steadily out of the window at the brick wall opposite as though seeing something of intense interest. Suddenly a telephone rang, and like a flash his entire body lost its repose. — (Student theme)

*Motion.* This covers a variety of motions differing in scope and nature.

1. *Gait and carriage.* Every individual is marked not only by the way in which he sits or stands but by the way in which he moves about; and not only has he his individual gait and carriage, but these, while retaining their own quality, shift with his age. Clumsiness, elegance, timid tentativeness, bold assurance—all are mere beginnings of the list. Springiness or stiffness, military precision or slouchiness, are both interesting in themselves and indexes to the people whom in a measure they characterize. A great army of verbs used to

differentiate modes of progress have been demanded by the necessity for discrimination. Carriage, moreover, it should be noticed, includes not only the method of making progress but all characteristic postures even when at rest.

She is a tall slender girl and executes the new twist beautifully. There is a real science in her accomplishment, for it absorbs her whole attention. When she performs on that long level sweep between Cobb and Lexington, she is so intent that her face assumes a philosophic aspect, and her eyes look through you into the space beyond. Her technique is marvelous. She succeeds in obliterating all motion above the hips, the body being held quite rigid. Her arms are bent to the proper angle with the elbows exactly three inches from the sides, while her head, poised in the top of a Robespierre, tilts a bit forward, her chin caressing the open spot in the front of her collar. The right foot is lifted, swings in close to the left ankle and then changes to the right, the never-relaxing body accompanying with a twist to the right. The left foot has its turn, then the right again, and by the time the Law Building is reached, enough velocity and rhythm is gained to make her gait seem like the semi-rotations of a patent washing machine. — (Student theme)

For what purpose he wears those thick lenses in his glasses I have not yet been able to reason out. He never looks through them. They are invariably poised on the same spot on his long straight nose. In addressing his class, his chin drops between the wings of his collar, the corners of his mouth droop, and his eyebrows are arched. He holds his head at an angle of about ten degrees and his beady black eyes peep over the tops of the lenses. The transition from this position to that of reading something on the table or in his hands is jerky, slow, and always the same. He raises his head, tilts it backward, sticks out his chin, and lowers his eyes until he can just see between his fat cheeks and the lower rims of the lenses. Likewise in glancing from side to side, his head jerks in the direction opposite to that in which he is looking. He always gives the impression of a horse hampered with blinders. — (Student theme)

2. *Characteristic gesture.* Every person has individual poses and gestures. Often these are indicative of little in the

character of the individual, but they are distinguishing marks even though they reveal nothing. One lecturer, for instance, may regularly manipulate his notes in a distracting way; another may stride back and forth upon the platform. The group of schoolboys who heard the first public speech of a man now widely known in America will never forget the fashion in which his enthusiasm for the subject would draw him from the desk and how the subsequent loss of his train of thought would lead him to an eager dive for, and inspection of, his notes. Habits of speaking to people at only the left or right of the audience, of glancing periodically at the floor, of indulging in needless gestures, have all of them their descriptive value; and similarly in the behavior of people not in public life the same idiosyncrasies are notable. An educator of wide reputation in America seldom attempts any fine discrimination of judgment — whether speaking of a painting, a lyric poem, or a salad dressing — without holding thumb and forefinger together at the height of his eye as though he were attempting to catch the fine point between them. Arnold Bennett whimsically cites Edwin Clayhanger as minutely changing the position of every article of silverware before him as he sat down to luncheon. Few people are free from such peculiarities. The observation of them is good practice, and the effectiveness of them in description at times is very great.

His whole attitude, as he explained various points of grammar, was sleepy. He lazily moved from place to place, bringing out his explanations with extreme slowness. Even his dry humor was accompanied with a sleepy smile. He reproved his students with a lazy admonition of his hand. All of his manifestations of emotion seemed to be hindered by a secret hand that did not permit full use of his limbs. —(Student theme)

The appearance of the speaker was not what you would call impressive. His head was loose, his shoulders loose,—his whole body loose. But he was intensely in earnest. His body and his head swayed toward each side of the audience with continuous regularity, keeping time, time, time to his impassioned voice. His hands were always moving. With rhythmic regularity, the right was punching nervously into the left. The regular movement was frequently interrupted by gestures, well enough in themselves, but in their weakness entirely out of keeping with the tone of his voice. His speech ended with one last roar of thunder, with one more caricature of a gesture. He jerkily bent his neck, mumbled "I thank you," and with self-conscious swiftness made for his seat. —(Student theme)

3. *Facial expression.* The possibilities in the use of facial expression are so obvious as hardly to need much emphasis. Immobility of feature is often as significant in revealing self-control or phlegmatic indifference as is the light and shade which usually follows play of emotion. If a smile, an odd contortion of the face, a habitual frown, or a squint is continually recurrent, and if it recurs regularly for the same cause, it deserves its place in description.

*Manner of speech, voice, and laugh.* A voice, even when the hearer does not attend to what is said, tells much of its owner. The degree of refinement of the speaker is largely indicated in the flexibility of tone, in pitch, in the relation of volume to the number of people addressed. Rapidity or slowness of speech, on the other hand, while interesting, indicates little beneath the surface. Every language has its dialects, and these, appearing in utterance, lend much to the color of fiction. Faithfully to portray dialect depends upon the pronunciation of words more than idiom, and is a very difficult undertaking. Moreover it is often a wasted art on account of the laziness of the reader who will not contribute enough attention really to catch the effect. The wide range

of adjectives used in the description of voice is an acknowledgment of the unconscious attention paid it. On the stage its characterization value is recognized in the kinds of voice demanded of certain parts. The romantic villain is usually hoarse and husky, the society villain correspondingly smooth; not because a melodious voice fits him, but rather because of its peculiar inappropriateness. A stage heroine afflicted with a sore throat and a husky utterance can hardly redeem this defect by any skill of acting, so strong is the prejudice in favor of melodious utterance from a heroine. With these habitual distinctions ever present, the usefulness of attention to voices in description is evident. Laugh and voice are usually in a measure associated, and in the same measure indicate culture or its absence. What line of Goldsmith's is more effective than "And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind"? Not only this, but character with its changes brings changes in both these kinds of utterance. Considered apart from the spoken word, which is a direct exponent of character and will be touched upon later, they are mere physical symbols of the spirit within; yet by themselves — in descriptions of speech at a distance, under circumstances which make it inarticulate, or in strange languages — voice, which attached itself to language, and the laugh, which is universal, are at times striking in their descriptive effects. How striking, Rossetti has shown in "The Last Confession."

When she that I had run all risks to meet  
Laughed as I told you, my life burned to death  
Within me, for I thought it like the laugh  
Heard at the fair. She had not left me long;  
But all she might have changed to, or might change to,  
(I know naught since — she never speaks a word —)  
Seemed in that laugh. — D. G. ROSSETTI, "A Last Confession"

A gurgling, bubbling falsetto laugh floated up to me from the room below. While it lasted, which was for a considerable period, it grew louder and more hysterical, till it became entirely still, with only the sound of an occasional sigh or breathless pant. After a few seconds the sounds were renewed with double vigor, evidently becoming contagious, for boisterous howls and shrieks mingled with but could not drown the sound of the fat boy's infectious mirth. — (Student theme)

*The effect upon the observer.* Although this aspect of description has been discussed before, it deserves especial mention in connection with the description of individuals. So sensitive are many people that the presence of others affects them directly in an emotional way. This is not only true of the most obvious example, that of the recognition of greatness when one is in the presence of it, but also in the daily intercourse of men and women of common clay. The same individual will be loquacious in company with one associate and apparently be deprived of any but the powers of the most commonplace speech when tête-à-tête with another. The appearance of a third may introduce a factor which will put all three at perfect ease. Sometimes an unaccountable irritation will fill one upon the arrival of an acquaintance for whom one has respect and even a kind of affection. Some people make one contentious, others placid and complacent; and a striking fact is that the effect produced by an individual upon one observer may be in total opposition to that produced upon another. These rather subtle distinctions are naturally employed with the greatest frequency in minute realistic fiction. The writer of romances is dealing in large effects, but in the pages of Howells or Henry James this reaction between man and man is often so developed as to add greatly to the interest of certain situations.

There should be no confusion between two types of description in terms of effect. One of these is the description of the thing observed in terms of the effect upon the describer. In this case, there is an accumulation of detail upon the described person — his loud voice, his raucous laugh, his clumsy entrance, his general inconsiderateness, and so on. The other is a description of the effect in which the primary attention is thrown not upon the person described but upon the feelings he stimulates — a nameless mood, its apparent causelessness, its persistence in spite of no apparent good ground, and so on.

Her presence changes me. The tone of my voice softens, and my tongue catches up words which are seldom at my command. I wax rather loquacious and even interesting, I fancy. I marvel how so many ideas could dawn on me, and my mind invariably assumes a philosophic attitude. It was in her company that I first began my study of the poverty-stricken and saw them in a sympathetic loving light. I always feel the faults of my friends slipping away, and the memory of my habitual sarcasm shocks me. I can actually tell a joke so that the point is funny; on one occasion I successfully told two. —(Student theme)

*Stress of emotion.* Again it need be said that the foregoing methods of description are all available in attempting to portray a person under stress of emotion, and that in spite of any attempt to refrain from doing so, many of the subjects which have thus far been mentioned as proper to description will reveal a play of feeling on the part of the person described. As in all other instances, the first inclination in choosing a subject under this head is to resort to extraordinary examples — people in paroxysms of anger, in ecstasies of joy, in throes of pain, in abysmal sorrow, and so on. But there is a wide field for observation among exhibitions of

feeling less pronounced than the scale. Side by side w of routine life run a series sure, display is a somewhat ; these. Yet to the real obs conduct. Complacency is a perhaps one of the least de detect through perceptible sig beginnings of irritability ; cur degrees of gratification ; sati in the arts, as shown by the picture gallery, or a member these are displayed in indiv emotions (see p. 218) that a of approaches is impossible, are the following :

## I. *Genuine emotion as exi*

A typical instance would be that who exhibited it by the cold minded gaze into space; the appearance followed by interruption and, start of a different action; and of feeling mentioned in the preceding evidences.

## 2. *Emotion as described by*

The briefest of pictures, as for instance of a child in distress followed by a statement of the childishly tragic source of unhappiness, can tell the story. The three stanzas of James Whitcomb Riley's "There, little girl; don't cry" are all illustrations of this method. Moreover, of course, this descriptive method may be applied to all sorts of adult subjects.

3. *The pretense of a state of mind.* An amusing illustration of this is supplied at many concerts by people who wish to give the impression of being enraptured at what is boring them, or by people at plays or lectures in foreign languages who do not wish to acknowledge that they fail to understand, or by serious-minded gentlefolk who miss the point of a joke but hesitate to admit the fact. All forms of hypocrisy lead to displays of this sort.

4. *Absence of the feeling which would naturally be expected.* Sometimes immobility of face and conduct under striking circumstances is quite as interesting as the display of emotion itself. One recalls in this connection the historic declaration of "Another such victory and we are ruined." Stoical endurance of pain or bereavement, indifference to the emotions of others, heroic degrees of self-control, and deplorable exhibitions of lack of sympathy occur frequently in human experience and in fiction which portrays it.

She sat motionless in her deep chair. To the casual glance, she might have seemed to be resting. Her betraying hands were hidden in the folds of her gray gown; her dimmed eyes were veiled; she seemed very quiet.

Resting! Every quivering nerve, every rigid muscle, belied it. A certain tenseness, more of atmosphere than attitude; a slight hardening in the contour of her cheek; a moment's lack of control of her white lips; the slight contraction of her shoulders, betrayed her. She was waiting. She never looked at that closed door, but, her head a little inclined, she listened, — listened; and deep in the folds of her gown, her thin, veined hands tore slowly at a bit of lace.

She tried to calm herself by feeling her pulse, and saying over and over, "This is purely physical; this pounding heart, this sense of dread; pay no attention." She tried to convince herself that the doctors were expert; that a case like this was common, nothing to worry over; — and then a smothered sound from behind that hateful door brought its echo to her lips, tore at her brain as she tore

at her handkerchief. Yet she sat perfectly still. Noise would bother him, they had said. — (Student theme)

At last with the failure of the lettuces came the breaking point. I was in the little arbour learning Latin irregular verbs when it happened. I can see him still, his peculiar tenor voice still echoes in my brain, shouting his opinion of intensive culture for all the world to hear, and slashing away at that abominable mockery of a crop with a hoe. We had tied them up with bast only a week or so before, and now half were rotten and half had shot up into tall slender growths. He had the hoe in both hands and slogged. Great wipes he made, and at each stroke he said, "Take that!"

The air was thick with flying fragments of abortive salad. It was a fantastic massacre. It was the French Revolution of that cold tyranny, the vindictive overthrow of the pampered vegetable aristocrats. After he had assuaged his passion upon them, he turned for other prey; he kicked holes in two of our noblest marrows, flicked off the heads of half a row of artichokes, and shied the hoe with a splendid smash into the cucumber frame. — H. G. WELLS, "The New Machiavelli"

*Description of character.* When one comes to the treatment of human character, the border line between exposition and description is reached. The revelation of a man's character may be completely made in extended fiction, just as it is in life, by his behavior. A statement of it may, however, be made largely in abstract terms. For literary purposes these methods are equally valuable, each being adapted to the kind of story being told and to the importance of the character in the story. It is evident that figure, motion, voice and laugh, display of feeling, are all of them evidence toward the revelation of a man's individuality. By means of these and these alone, a complete description may be given. In addition to these, however, and with the acknowledgment that the border line of both description and of narration has been reached, some of the chief additional ways of exhibiting character can be discussed.

1. *The spoken word.* There is a genuine distinction between this and the matter of voice and speech mentioned above. They are discussed in a former paragraph only as matters of physical import. The spoken word, however, deals with what a man thinks, how he expresses it, what his prejudices are, and with all the finer points of character which the mere sound of his voice cannot possibly reveal. Fiction abounds in illustrations of this sort. Certain ones have been used in the earlier portions of this chapter (see also pp. 66-67, 76-77, 151-152).

The incredible truth began to dawn on him.

"I am Clem Sypher — Friend of Humanity — Sypher's Cure. Now do you know?"

"I'm afraid I'm shockingly ignorant," said Zora.

"So am I," said Septimus.

"Good Heavens!" cried Sypher, bringing both hands down on the table, tragically. "Don't you ever read your advertisements?"

"I'm afraid not," said Zora.

"No," said Septimus.

Before his look of mingled amazement and reproach they felt like Sunday-school children taken to task for having skipped the 'Kings of Israel.

"Well," said Sypher, "this is the reward we get for spending millions of pounds and the shrewdest brains in the country for the benefit of the public! Have you ever considered what anxious thought, what consummate knowledge of human nature, what dearly bought experience go to the making of an advertisement? You'll go miles out of your way to see a picture or a piece of sculpture that has n't cost a man half the trouble and money to produce, and you'll not look at an advertisement of a thing vital to your life, though it is put before your eyes a dozen times a day. Here's my card, and here are some leaflets for you to read at your leisure. They will repay perusal."

He drew an enormous pocketbook from his breast pocket and selected two cards and two pamphlets, which he laid on the table. Then he arose with an air of suave yet offended dignity. Zora,

seeing that the man, in some strange way, was deeply hurt, looked up at him with a conciliatory smile.—WILLIAM J. LOCKE, "Septimus"

"Flunk for you."

The student addressed turned the color of the dreaded envelope. The cigarette he had in his mouth dropped and caught in the cuff of his trousers. Aroused to consciousness by the laughter that greeted him, he proceeded to laugh also. It was a miserable cackle, ending in an agonized cough. Then he became angry and tried to nonplus his laughing informer by quickly taking in his person from head to foot with a vertical movement of the head. "Let's shoot some pool," he said to a friend near by.—(Student theme)

She set down her basket, gasping a little, — and leaned against the table. "No 'm, I ain't sick." Her lips smiled wearily. "And I ain't weak, — I'm real strong for my size. Yes 'm, I guess I'm tired, — a little. He put in an awful bad night; the pain was fierce, an' that of course made him kind o' mean and cranky. And then if I mention the drink to him, he flies up terrible mad. And of course it's that that keeps him from gettin' well. But what can I do? He gets Schmitty to bring it to him while I'm gone all day, and of course when I come home at night, — why, there you are." Then hastily, as if conscious that she had said more than usual: "But I ain't complainin'. No 'm, I ain't. He's a good man, Jim is, when he lets the drink alone." Her back straightened a little, her eyes, looking through and beyond me, took on a look that once was pride, and was now a broken-hearted defiance.

"And since he's been laid up this way, he ain't laid a hand on me." —(Student theme)

2. *The comments of others.* This is so obvious a device as to need little exposition. What a man's partner, next-door neighbor, poor relations, guardian, father-in-law, may say of him — or what two of them in conversation may expound of him — is very often used in the early portion of the drama, which is known technically as the exposition. No better single source for study of the successful uses of this device can be found than in the first acts of Ibsen's social dramas.

3. *A habitual mood.* The mention of play of emotion a few pages back included all kinds of exhibitions of feeling, however fleeting and transitory. In general, and in some cases with particular significance, people are characterized by a habitual state of feeling from which they rise or drop into others of various sorts. It is the particular desire of many portrait painters to determine this ruling state of mind. Some with gifted skill are able in a few sittings to catch and fix on canvas the dominating feeling which acquaintances and even intimates have failed to perceive on account of the various changes from grave to gay, from frivolous to severe. Many an individual, recognizing what he may consider to be a failing in himself, cultivates in conscious ways habits of self-expression which are calculated to disguise his true feeling. Thus conscientious and hard-working, even careworn, men play at the game of appearing nonchalant and indifferent, relapsing into their moods only when they are among intimates and when they feel they are not under inspection. And similarly ne'er-do-wells and spendthrifts strive to produce the impression of being superhumanly sober.

4. *Characteristic surroundings.* Character may be readily interpreted by the objects with which a man surrounds himself, provided he has had a hand in their selection. Æsthetic taste, habits of workmanship, orderliness, system, are all in some measure revealed, even in the absence of the occupant, by the kind of quarters which he chooses and furnishes for himself. In this respect, as in all others, the negative as well as the positive revelation is worth considering.

Marjorie felt there was something in these people that she did n't begin to understand; she needed some missing clue that would unlock the secret of their confused peculiarity. . . . She could n't

quite see why it was that there was at the same time an attempt at ornament and a disregard of beauty; she could n't quite do as her mother did and dismiss it as an absurdity and have done with it. She could n't understand, too, why everything should be as if it were faded and weakened from something originally bright and clear.

All the rooms were thick with queer little objects that indicated a quite beaver-like industry in the production of "work." There were embroidered covers for nearly every article on the wash-handstand, and mats of wool and crochet wherever anything stood on anything; there were "tidies" everywhere, and odd little brackets covered with gilded and varnished fir cones and bearing framed photographs and little jars and all sorts of colourless, dusty little objects, and everywhere on the walls tacks sustained cross fans with badly painted flowers or transfer pictures. There was a jar on the bedroom mantel covered with varnished postage stamps and containing grey-haired dried grasses. There seemed to be a moral element in all this, for in the room Sydney shared with Rom there was a decorative piece of lettering which declared that —

"Something attempted, something done,  
Has earned a night's repose."

— H. G. WELLS, "Marriage"

5. *Through a typical day.* How a man regularly spends his time — as shown in the program he adopts, the way in which he carries it through, and his own attitude toward it — is perhaps as significant as any single set of facts which could be presented.

It was getting on for the Stoics' dinner hour when Gregory found himself in Piccadilly, and, Stoic after Stoic, they were getting out of cabs and passing the club doors. The poor fellows had been working hard all day on the race-course, the cricket-ground, at Hurlingham, or in the Park; some had been to the Royal Academy, and on their faces was a pleasant look: "Ah, God is good — we can rest at last!" And many of them had had no lunch, hoping to keep their weights down, and many who had lunched had not done themselves as well as might be hoped, and

some had done themselves too well; but in all their hearts the trust burned bright that they might do themselves better at dinner, for their God *was* good, and dwelt between the kitchen and the cellar of the Stoics' Club. And all—for all had poetry in their souls—looked forward to those hours in paradise when, with cigars between their lips, good wine below, they might dream the daily dream that comes to all true Stoics for about fifteen shillings or even less, all told." — JOHN GALSWORTHY, "The Country House"

6. *Through past history.* The representative type of this sort of characterization, which tells what a man is by telling what he has passed through, is the old story of "from the log cabin to the White House"; yet individuals who do not arrive at distinction, as well as presidents of the country, are largely determined by their experiences. Privileges they have enjoyed or hardships they have passed through; prejudices they have assimilated; points of view which they feel they have adopted but which have been imposed on them by family or neighborhood associations—all of these are determining factors in the make-up of the adult.

"Grind! Yes, I know I'm a grind. Anybody is a grind who studies when there's something else he might as well be doing. Grind—work," she growled now more to her desk than to me. "Work,—I've always worked. When I was too small to do anything but play, I worked hard. I cut out so many paper dolls in just so much time, and counted up how much longer it would take me to cut out the rest. Grimly I took up the task of finishing them, and above all the pleasure in cutting out the dolls was the satisfaction of having worked in getting them. When mama died I took care of my younger brother; that is, I saw that he was kept miserably clean and ate properly. I showed my love for my father by working myself to a frazzle trying to keep things in order,—and papa hates order. Then I took music lessons for the good of my soul, and forced myself to practice an hour a day. Work! I never worked harder in my life with as little result. In High School, as a duty to my class, I filled the joint offices of treasurer and secretary.

Before school and after school I collected class dues. I worked so hard over the dance programs, I was too tired to enjoy the fun. Now I am fussing over the molecular theory, and the relation between wealth and well-being. Who cares whether I get A or F on the quiz to-morrow? If I get A, I 'll have to keep on working to keep my grade; and if I get F, I 'll have to work harder to raise my average. 'Oh, Pammondas, you aint got the sense you was bo'n with, and you won't nevah get the sense you was bo'n with,' she quoted, laughing through her tears. — (Student theme)

She was the eldest daughter of a large family and consequently had always to "help with the work." She was continually called from play by her mother's fretful voice saying, "Anna, do come and wash the dishes. A great girl like you idling your time and me slaving night and day! You should take shame, you should." She would sigh resignedly, whisper "good-bye" to Arabella the rag doll, and slip into the enormous apron that always typified for her dishwashing. When she was about eighteen years old, she became sullenly rebellious. Life seemed to be nothing but an eternal washing of dishes. She did not know why it was not an eternal dusting or mending, but somehow the sordidness and monotony of her life was concentrated for her in dishwashing. One day she broke out with sudden violence, "I hate it. I do. I never have any fun. I'm always washing dishes and I wish they 'd all smash, I do."

Her mother compressed her thin lips and replied sharply,

"Ah ha, Miss, temper! and after all I 've done for you."

At last the dreary aspect of life brightened. She was in love; she was to be married. All sorts of new ideas and emotions vaguely stirred within her. The beauty of the world began to appeal to her, though she did not know it in those terms. She bought some rather bedraggled flowers one day with a few pennies she had saved, and shyly brought them home.

"Ain't it grand," her mother had remarked sarcastically, "to have money to throw away?"

She never bought any more, but she used to have queer little dreams about a country where flowers grew. She used to see it quite vividly, a blue sky and warm sunlight shining on trees and bright patches of flowers. She had a little thrill of delight when a pert sparrow on her window sill cocked his head and looked at her.

"I always thought sparrows ugly," she thought.

She was married one clear June day, and she thought life was very beautiful indeed. But gradually the brief glow vanished. Her visions of the country with the gay flowers grew fewer and fewer, and the number of babies grew rapidly larger. She was maid and cook and laundress and nurse and mother all in one. She rose in the gray of the early winter mornings to get breakfast for her "man," and she sat up through the summer nights with the baby, made fretful by the heat. She cooked and washed and mended and forgot to be very neat about her dress. She never noticed blue sky or sunshine any more except to remark that "it always rained on wash days."

One day her oldest daughter exclaimed passionately,

"I'm always washing dishes and I hate it. I never have any fun, just dishes!"

"Temper!" said the mother bitterly, "and after all I've done for you!" — (Student theme)

#### SUMMARY

Whatever the subject matter of description may be and whatever the specific point that is to be brought home, the writer must always steer between the Scylla of flatness and the Charybdis of flightiness. A description which is severely and explicitly literal, except in the rarest cases, is almost sure to be unsuccessful. Description which is presented in monotonously artificial sentences has little chance of capturing the reader. To succeed, it must be clear, suggestive, and vivacious, adjusting its whole tone to the tone of the subject matter.

What should not be the characteristics of a description can be summarized in a few "Don'ts" which are inspired by the very great frequency with which beginners violate them. To state just why these mistakes are indulged in would be to inquire rather deeply into the psychology of the writer, although broadly it may be said that almost all of them result from unwise attempts to secure rhetorical emphasis.

Do not use exclamatory and interrogative sentences when the declarative sentence can be made to serve. It is only in the rarest cases that these variant forms are really effective.

Do not rise to poetic heights except when describing genuinely poetic subject matter, and for practice purposes do not attempt such subjects.

Do not pile up adjectives and adverbs. There is no more justification for being a spendthrift with these descriptive coins than there is for any other sort of extravagance.

Do not use, or at any rate do not abuse, the weak intensives, such as *certainly*, *surely*, *veritably*, and so on. In amateur writing and schoolgirl speech these words have lost all emphatic power. And for the same reason, in beginning the summary of a description do not conclude with "*Altogether*, it was one of the greatest sights . . .," or "*Altogether*, he was the most dilapidated specimen . . .," or the like.

Do not expound ; describe !

As description has practically no independent place in literature but plays a subordinate part in argument, in exposition sometimes, and always in narration, it may help in doing experimental work to write description as though it were to be connected with some narrative. It is possible further to attempt a whole series, all of which might be interwoven into the same story. To indulge in such a harmless imagining will in many cases make the work more vivid and less fragmentary, and less uninteresting in the practice period. Finally, if all this work is done with the thought that its chief object is to sharpen one's analytical power in the reading of fiction, and if, as the descriptive work is proceeding, one keeps the chief principles in mind during the reading of magazine stories or novels, a further stimulus will be supplied.

## CHAPTER XI

### NARRATION

#### *Narration defined.*

*Narration of fact—without plot.* The expanded episode. Running narrative covering an extended period. Characteristics common to all narration.

*Narration of things imagined—with plot.* The importance of the conclusion. The author's freedom to modify his material. Construction out of definite time units.

*Planning the short story—Clearness.* The "situation" as a unit. Typical "situations." Compression of time. Selection of point of view—for Clearness.

*Developing the short story—Interest.* Story openings. The characters. The backgrounds. The use of dialogue.

#### *Summary.*

### NARRATION DEFINED

Narration, as distinguished from the other forms of discourse, is the written record of what has happened. Like exposition and argumentation, though it keeps its own identity it is free to introduce passages not only of these forms but more especially of description. The feature which makes narration unique is that in its construction it depends primarily upon the order of time. Roughly speaking, all types of narration may be said to fall in two general divisions — narration of what one knows, which is usually presented without plot ; and narration of what one has imagined, which is usually narration with plot. Furthermore it may be said that all the records of what happened in either of these classes are divided between what may be called running narration — the briefly

stated, uncolored chronicle of broad periods of time—and developed situations—the detailed presentation of brief and definitely limited periods of time. With these general statements in mind, an approach may be made to the different sorts of subject matter, and first to that sort which is often mistakenly neglected.

#### NARRATION OF FACT—WITHOUT PLOT

**The episode.** The commonest type of narration is the recording of what one knows, or what is most often narration without plot. The simplest form is the brief episode, the chronicle of the happenings of a few seconds or at most a minute or two. This sort of record of past fact is found in diaries, in journals, in personal letters, and in newspaper accounts—productions in which interest depends largely on the effectiveness with which such episodes are written out. When one writes, "The effect of his unexpected entrance was startling and dramatic," the sentence as it stands is full of possibilities but actually without interest. Even if the general situation is known, there is much to be desired. Was it the entrance of a college dean among a group of roistering students, or that of a football hero at a critical moment when he was supposed to be bedridden, or that of Mr. Roosevelt at the Milwaukee rally after he had been shot, or that of Rear-Admiral Peary at his first public appearance following the discovery of the Pole? The elaboration of details arising from such a statement as this becomes in the end a piece of description; but if a second and subsequent effect is added to it, the product is narration. "The effect of his unexpected entrance was startling and dramatic; it was only

after the most heroic efforts that the chairman restored order." Now there is a succession of events, a passage of time, and if the sentence is developed, an episode is the result. And a similar result would follow with other appropriate endings: "for he was a killjoy in the literal sense, and in thirty seconds the noisiest of the group was reduced to silence and wondering what would happen."

It was only the day before, that Larry and Pauline had dared me to do it,— and that I had stifled my ambition to shine socially by discreetly refusing to take the dare. The ignominy I suffered from this conservative attitude was painful; their discordant shrieks of "Cow-yard! Cow-yard!" fell scathingly on my unworthy head. And now to think that I had actually performed the feat successfully. Of course, I knew it was purely an accident, but they did n't,— and I was respected accordingly.

We had been industriously wearing out our clothes all morning by sliding down the haystack. One side had been slicked down beautifully,— two or three hours of earnest sliding had been consumed in achieving this delightful slickness, and so of course I was banished as an undesirable. I was too slow getting up and down, and I bumped, and I disturbed the general smoothness, and I always fell over on my nose when I landed, and I was too little anyway. But I was not to be frozen out completely; I took myself with dignity to the other side, shut my eyes in agony and slid. The slide was more agony. It was a series of prickly bumps from top to bottom and at the bottom was the worst bump of all. It was then I won respect and admiration by fulfilling the dare.

It was more of a surprise to him than to me. I landed neatly, squarely on his back, my short arms embracing his bristly neck, even as I had expected to embrace the ground, and we set off at a dizzy pace. His squeals and grunts of dismay were answered lustily by shrieks as we tore round and round the haystack, upon which I was dimly conscious of two figures waving their arms and cheering wildly. The harder I clung the faster he went. And he began to lose his sense of direction; he was really quite reckless. We sped crazily down the driveway, barely missing a collision with the

hickory tree; I shut my eyes and a second later landed, splendidly, dramatically, in the water trough. — (Student theme)

The guide had rowed the boat several times around the lake, and still no fish had swallowed the tempting bait; so we came to shore deciding to have lunch without the fish course. We got the fire started and the coffee on and the bacon sizzling in the pan, and then found two cans of beans in the lunch pack. We gazed on them with open mouths, wondering how to heat them. Ed said to punch, a hole in the top of each can and put them next to the fire. Alfreda, the dainty cook, said no, — to put them in a pan of hot water, but not to punch holes. We ended by placing them beside the fire unpunctured.

At last everything was ready except opening the beans. "Harry" begged for that little pleasure as she had done nothing to help. She took a hunting knife and, bending over, drove one of the blades into the can. We heard a strange hissing, ending with the peculiar noise made by the water from a shower-bath as it hits the human body. There stood "Harry" covered with beans and tomato sauce, — beans in her hair, all over her face and clothes, in her sweater pockets, dropping from her spread fingers, hanging from her eyelashes, oozing slowly off her nose and splattering down on to her tie. — (Student theme)

#### **EXERCISE**

Develop the following sentences by the use of vivid detail into passages of one hundred and fifty to three hundred words in length.

The last three blocks seemed interminable, but we panted through the Central Station just in time to board the observation car of the moving train before the front vestibule was closed.

For a moment the danger to little John seemed terrible; then at the policeman's signal the big touring car halted so quietly and easily that she wondered what she had feared.

To conceal her happy surprise she pretended to glance into the shop window with casual interest. When she turned he was gone.

He passed through the great dining room so awkwardly that from a dozen tables amused eyes were turned upon him.

No one would have guessed from the ease of his posture and the fullness of tone in his opening lines how narrowly he had escaped stage fright.

It took him a full quarter of an hour to get his telephone connection.

A few minutes before midnight the first whistles began. As the hour struck, another New Year's salute was in full progress.

Although the agent used all his powers of persuasion, Mrs. Blank knew her own mind, and within five minutes, to his amazement, he found himself politely dismissed.

It seemed a shame to hurry by the pathetic little figure on the pavement. Nothing but the greater need ahead could have persuaded him to do it.

As he hurried down the street a little girl slipped on the ice and fell direct in his path. To my disgust he circled round her and hurried on faster than ever.

**Running narration covering an extended period.** The breath of life in narration is found in such deliberate elaboration of details as this exercise demands. In much of the best history, and in all standard biography and autobiography since the days of James Boswell, the pages which are most effective are filled with visible, audible detail. Yet, though these are the pages which especially cling in the memory, running narration which covers a succession of unexpanded incidents or episodes is an extremely important division of the art. A passage in a man's life, no single event of which demands circumstantial presentation, may still in the aggregate be interesting and important. Thus the whole selection quoted from Benjamin Franklin at the end of this chapter is as famous as any in his "Autobiography," though made up of running narration. As a rule, in any record of events which is more than a few hundred words long, the detailed and the undetailed types are in conjunction. So, in a passage from

Carlyle's "Two Hundred and Fifty Years Ago" in the selected paragraphs which follow, there is no question as to the real interest of all that precedes the mention of Sherwood Forest. There is a vivid rapidity of movement in "but of course the Holleses and the Stanhopes could not let him be hanged; they made interest, they fee'd law-counsel, — they smuggled him away to Ireland, and he could not be hanged." Yet this and all which leads up to "the forest of merry Sherwood" sinks into the background in contrast to the subsequent episode in which Markham is laid low. This is like a jewel in its setting, properly followed as well as preceded by the running narration of swift-moving event.

Pudsey, a retainer on the Shrewsbury Worksop side, bit his thumb at Orme, a retainer on the Holles Haughton side; was called out with drawn rapier; was slain on the spot, like fiery Tybalt, and never bit his thumb more. Orme, poor man, was tried for murder; but of course the Holleses and the Stanhopes could not let him be hanged; they made interest, they fee'd law-counsel, — they smuggled him away to Ireland, and he could not be hanged. Whereupon Gervase Markham, a passably loose-tongued, loose-living gentleman, sworn squire-of-dames to the Dowager of Shrewsbury, took upon himself to say publicly, "That John Holles was himself privy to Pudsey's murder; that John Holles himself if justice were done — !" And thereupon John Holles, at Haughton, in Notts, special date not given, presumable date 1594 or '95, indicted this emphatic Note, already known to some readers: —

For Gervase Markham

Whereas you have said that I was guilty of that villany of Orme in the death of Pudsey, I affirm that you lie, and lie like a villain; which I shall be ready to make good upon yourself, or upon any gentleman my equal living.

John Holles

Gervase Markham, called upon in this emphatic way, answered, "Yes, he would fight; certainly; — and it should be in Worksop

Park, on such a day as would suit Holles best." Worksop Park ; locked Park of the Shrewsbury ! Holles, being in his sound wits, cannot consent to fight there ; and Markham and the world silently insinuate, "Are you subject to niceties in your fighting, then? Readier, after all, with your tongue than with your rapier?" These new intolerabilities John Holles had to pocket as he could, to keep close to the scabbard, beside his rapier, till perhaps a day would come.

Time went on : John Holles had a son ; then, in 1597, a second son, Denzil by name. Denzil Holles, Oliver Cromwell's Denzil : yes, reader, this is he ; come into the world not without omens ! For at his christening, Lady Stanhope, glad matron, came as grandmother and godmother ; and Holles, like a dutiful son-in-law, escorted her homewards through the Forest again. Forest of merry Sherwood, where Robin Hood and others used to inhabit ; that way lies their road. And now, riding so towards Shelton House, through the glades of Sherwood, whom should they chance to meet but Gervase Markham also ambling along, with some few in his company ! Here, then, had the hour arrived.

With slight salutation and time of day, the two parties passed on : but Holles, with convenient celerity, took leave of his mother-in-law : "Adieu, noble Madam, it is all straight road now !" Waving a fond adieu, Holles gallops back through Sherwood glades ; overtakes Markham ; with brief emphasis, bids him dismount, and stand upon his guard. And so the rapiers are flashing and jingling in the Forest of Sherwood ; and two men are flourishing and fencing, their intents deadly and not charitable. "Markham," cried Holles, "guard yourself better, or I shall spoil you presently" ; for Markham, thrown into a flurry, fences ill ; in fact, rather capers and flourishes than fences ; his antagonist standing steady in his place the while, supple as an eel, alert as a serpent, and with a sting in him too. See, in a few passes, our alert Holles has ended the capering of Markham ; has pierced and spitted him through the lower abdominal regions, in very important quarters of the body, "coming out at the small of the back" ! That, apparently, will do for Markham ; loose-tongued, loose-living Gervase Markham lies low, having got enough. Visible to us there, in the glades of ancient Sherwood, in the depths of long-vanished years ! O Dry-asdust, was not there a Human Existence going on there too, of

hues older than the leaden-hazy? The fruit-trees looked all leafy, blossomy, my erudite friend, and the Life-tree Igdrasil which fills this Universe; and they had not yet rotted to brown peat! Torpid events shall be simply damnable, and continually claim oblivion from all souls; but the smallest fractions of events not torpid shall be welcome. John Holles, "with his man Acton," leaving Markham in this sated condition, ride home to Haughton with questionable thoughts.

Nevertheless Markham did not die. He was carried home to Worksop, pale, hopeless; pierced in important quarters of the body: and the Earl of Shrewsbury "gathered a hundred retainers to apprehend Holles"; and contrariwise the Earl of Sheffield came to Haughton with fifty retainers to protect Holles; — and in the meanwhile Markham began to show symptoms of recovering, and the retainers dispersed themselves again. The Doctor declared that Markham would live; but that, — but that — Here, we will suppose, the Doctor tragi-comically shook his head, pleading the imperfections of language! Markham did live long after; breaking several of the commandments, but keeping one of them it is charitably believed. For the rest, having "vowed never to eat supper nor to take the sacrament" till he was revenged on Holles, he did not enjoy either of these consolations in this world.

Such doings went forward in Sherwood Forest and in our English Life-arena elsewhere; the trees being as yet all green and leafy.  
— THOMAS CARLYLE, "Two Hundred and Fifty Years Ago"

#### EXERCISE

For a drill in the use of your own experiences, select material as follows:

#### RUNNING NARRATIVE COVERING AN EXTENDED PERIOD

- How I fell under the influence of —— (some great character).
- The making of an important friendship.
- Early experiences in —— (a new place of residence).
- The first month in a new school.
- The significant events of a journey (not an enumeration of towns).
- The development of a professional or business ambition.

## BRIEF EPISODES TOLD IN FULL

(Use material selected out of the above list.)

When I first heard —— (a celebrated speaker).

My discovery that —— and I were friends.

"Moving in."

An early episode in my —— school life.

The most interesting event in my journey from —— to ——.

How I found out that I wanted to be a doctor (*or* lawyer, *or* merchant).

**Characteristics common to all narration.** It is evident then, even with this simpler material, that there are certain necessary elements in narration. When the record of events is without plot and there is therefore no projection of the interest forward, each passage must have its own intrinsic value sufficient to hold the reader's attention. A single paragraph in a newspaper is in no respect different from the successive paragraphs in a casual chronicle no part of which is vitally dependent upon any other part. In the second place, effective narration, whether detailed or in the shape of a running survey, must be deliberately told. If the impression is given that the writer is in a hurry to get through and is scanting his material, the effect is ruined. Again, in all narration the distinction should be reënforced that definite detail has behind it the power of some general truth. When one reads Pepys or Evelyn or Boswell or Lockhart or Trevelyan and delves into the passing matters of daily life, his interest is not great unless he feels that these slight details have broad significance. When he reads of such an episode as that of John Holles and Gervase Markham, he says to himself, "This is very strange, but in those days, to be sure, men acted in just such a way." The point is no longer that

Holles and Markham acted so, but that their behavior was the behavior of "Two Hundred and Fifty Years Ago." On the other hand, when one reads of Johnson's pomposity, Goldsmith's little jealousies, Scott's benevolent patriotism, Dickens's love of play, he says to himself again, "I am glad to know these details, for these details are always true of men." This is perennial human nature displaying itself. So the behavior of the moment illustrates either the facts of a generation or the truth of all time.

#### NARRATION OF THINGS IMAGINED—WITH PLOT

**The importance of the conclusion.** The characteristics of good narration without plot are for the most part true of good narration with plot. Once again, each individual episode should have its own interest. But in story construction each unit has the further claim to attention that it is related to what has gone before and introductory to what follows, and that all of them lead to a common point of focus. Good narrative without plot may be laid down at any time and resumed at will ; a book marker is probably desirable. But good narrative with plot demands to be read to the end, and if the reader is interrupted he cannot help remembering just how far he has followed the march of events. There is only one point at which he can stop without feeling narrative hunger, and that is the end. This end may not please him, for the story may not turn out well. Yet if it be an old-fashioned romance, the end leaves nothing to be wondered about, and if it be a modern bit of realism, it is completed as a story ; one wishes only for the sequel. Stockton's famous "Lady or the Tiger," to be sure, leaves us in a dilemma as a deliberate

piece of eccentric story-telling. Howells's "April Hopes" concludes with the mismating of a young couple, and we feel that life has done them an ill turn. So either of these, like any other good story, comes to a definite punctuation point at which we are willing to stop and draw breath or even turn away permanently to other affairs.

**The author's freedom to modify his material.** This definite choice of a conclusion, the selection of such details as lead up to it, the tracing of a conflict of forces, the elaboration of little that much may be made clear, are all evidence that the telling of a story involves at its best the use of fact, and the bold manipulation of fact. It is therefore fair to distinguish history and biography and news writing as (what should be and usually are) the narration of fact, in contrast to fiction as the narration of things imagined. The Carlyle illustration contains excellent story material and many of the attributes of good story-telling, but in its present form it does not conclude definitely ; on the contrary it ravelled out casually into a trailing anticlimax.

**Construction out of definite time units.** The principles relative to good story telling are the principles applicable to all composition, but (let it be said once more) narrative is distinguished from all the other forms of discourse in the emphasis placed upon the time element. Description has its subordinate place ; exposition may even at times be introduced in extended narrative ; but the unit of the story is a time unit, and the material which is of special value in any story is the detailed account of what happened in certain definitely limited periods of time.

An examination of any standard novel already familiar to the reader is likely to cause surprise if it is resurveyed with

an idea of discovering the difference between the time involved in the entire story and the actual elapsed time which is presented to the reader. Hawthorne's "House of the Seven Gables," for instance, involves from the curse of Matthew Maule to the end of the story a period of something like a century. More than ninety-nine years of this, however, have passed before the actual opening of the story as it takes place in the lives of the surviving Pyncheons and Holgrave. The events with which they are connected take place within three months. Out of these three months eight days are selected for special development, and from the eight days something like twenty-three hours are used by Hawthorne as a time background for all that he narrates in detail. Scott's "Kenilworth" has to do in a way with the maturing years of Amy Robsart and with the critical events in the lives of her lovers, Tressilian and Leicester. Yet the elapsed time in the novel from beginning to end covers but sixteen days; from these, four or five are omitted in one bold jump, and a similarly limited use of the remaining time is made. Not only is the time that elapses within the limits of the story relatively short, but definitely limited units of time selected from this whole period are developed at greatest length. Thus a very great fraction of the completed story is devoted to a very small fraction of the total time. The unity of any story and the coherence between its parts are secured largely through the logical relationship of one time unit to another; and the emphasis of the story, as a work of writing, is largely achieved through the rejection of much in order that little may be well told. The success of the normal story arises from the effective treatment of a few carefully chosen and definitely limited periods of time.

The following data illustrate the point. They are selected from a set of comments on representative novels used by a class as material for a daily assignment.

AUTHOR AND STORY	TIME INVOLVED	TIME ELAPSED	DAYS IN DETAIL
Irving: Rip Van Winkle	About 40 years	20 years	1½ days
Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter	About 50 or 60 years	7 years	6 days
Dickens: A Christmas Carol	About 7 years	3 days	70 hours
Eliot: Silas Marner	About 31 years	16 years	3 days
Stevenson: Kidnapped	36 years	3 months	34 days
Kipling: The Phantom Rickshaw	About 6 years	3 years	7 days
Barrie: Margaret Ogilvy	76 years	29 years	16 days
Parker: The Judgment House	25 years	3 years	12 days
Locke: Stella Maris	21 years	6 years	26 days
Churchill: The Inside of the Cup	20 years	1 year	9 days

#### PLANNING THE SHORT STORY—CLEARNESS

**The situation as a unit.** The unit of narrative, a definitely limited period of time, has been given the technical name *situation*. When, as frequently occurs in talk, the comment is made, "What a good situation that would make in a story or play!" the speaker, whether he has analyzed the term or not, means that this given background, with these characters and the circumstances that surround them, is certain, in his opinion, to afford interesting developments. The several factors in a situation are location in time or place, presentation of characters, and the establishment of interest in some event involving the characters.

**Typical situations.** The progress of the story may be illustrated by reference to the favorite children's tale of the beautiful princess. Such a tale may be narrated at more or less length. The types of steps to be taken can, however, be discussed with reference to an opening, a middle, and a closing situation.

*The opening situation.* The opening situation begins with the formula, "Once upon a time in a far country a beautiful princess," and so on, by means of which formula time and place and one character are introduced. The prince in turn is mentioned in some fashion. The natural outcome is to be the winning of the princess's hand by her suitor, and the complication which makes the story move is that obstacle which stands between the prince and his beloved. This may be hostility between the two kingdoms ; the interventions of a rival or villain ; the imposition of a seemingly impossible task upon any suitor who shall win the princess ; or the like. When this obstacle has been made clear, the story is well started. The listener is informed as to the characters and complication and other preliminary data, and is ready for developments.

*Intermediate situations.* The middle situation, or any one of the intermediate ones, differs from the first in not having to indulge in explanation of preliminary matters but in its ability to assume all that has gone before,—depending on the past in its task of developing vividly a situation in the present,—and in its further obligation of continuing to throw the interest forward. This work may be done through the taking up of arms by the prince against the remorseless parent-king or, in more general terms, through the surmounting of certain of the obstacles between the prince and his heart's desire. But the intermediate situation leaves the affair still in doubt and, if possible, the reader more eager than ever to arrive at the consummation devoutly to be wished for.

*The closing situation.* The concluding situation, in contrast to the earlier ones, is merely to satisfy the reader as to what has happened and its immediate outcome, and, in the conventional story, it attempts to avoid the stimulation of any

curiosity as to the future. The old formula for this is of course, "And so they lived happily ever after." In a fashion, what is done in these simple story situations represents what must always be attempted — the establishment of interest, the statement of something to be achieved and the obstacles in the way of its achievement (sometimes although not always conflict of wills), and the final satisfaction of the reader. By the use of the term *satisfaction* is meant not *gratification* but simply allaying any desire for further light about the immediate circumstances. The outcome may be tragic, but at the same time so definite as to set at rest all doubts or curiosities.

**Compression of time.** The one remaining point to emphasize about the time scheme is that in the majority of cases the difference between the time involved by a whole story and the time which passes within its limits is a very great one. This is already illustrated by the table on page 333. In planning a story, the amateur is all too inclined to start far too early. The actual developed episode with which the story opens should be brought as near as possible to the corresponding episode with which it closes, and the inexperienced writer can well afford to distrust his first and his second inclination and to throw this beginning far later than the unimaginative pursuit of time order would dictate.

Finally, however many situations there may be in any story, except in the rarest cases they make up the bulk of the narrative and are effective only as each one is restricted to a very short period of time in which very specific things happen. What occurs between situations should be indicated in the briefest fashion, if not altogether left to the reader's imagination. What happens during these brief time units should be so told that the picture of the people against a

given background is presented in terms of speech and action as the writer recalls the scene.

**Selection of point of view — for Clearness.** The matter of point of view should be carefully studied for the sake of securing Clearness as well as for the sake of stimulating Interest (see pp. 25, 287-289). The reader should never be in doubt as to who the narrator of a given story is. It may be the author writing with a full knowledge of all that has gone on and taking advantage of all he knows. It may be the author writing as though through the experience of one of the characters. It may be a character telling the story in the first person. It may be even a succession or alternation of characters ; or it may be any combination of these devices which is contrived so that the reader always knows who is the story-teller and so that he is neither distracted by needless shifts nor confused by blurred and hazy vacillations from one to another. A conscious choice is the surest safeguard against mishap with reference to the point of view.

In the following paragraph Joseph Conrad gives the reader a glimpse of the thinking which precedes the telling of any story — in this case a story within a story.

"I don't want to bother you much with what happened to me personally," he began, showing in this remark the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear; "yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me—and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough too—and pitiful—not extraordinary in any way—not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.—JOSEPH CONRAD, "Youth"

**EXERCISE**

As practice work, it is well to study out time schemes in narrative structures by taking plot material and deciding on the main points in construction. For this purpose, select one or more of the following plots which have been successfully employed and, with reference to each, answer the following questions: What shall be the point of the story and with what situation shall it conclude? With what situation shall it be opened? Is there any reason for making an exception to the general rule of starting as late as possible? With this start decided upon, what preliminary information is necessary with reference to facts which took place before the opening of the story? How can this information best be given without boring the reader? Are any intermediate situations necessary? How many? When and where is each located, and what characters must appear? With all these facts in mind, what person or persons shall narrate the story?

A St. Louis young man and a Milwaukee girl know each other by reputation for years, though accidents continually prevent their meeting. One day by an odd chance they encounter each other on the steps of a house in Boston. They discuss mutual acquaintances and even each other, without disclosing their names. After dining together at a hotel they pretend to guess each other's names before exchanging cards, and then both acknowledge that they had recognized each other at first sight from photographs.

Dan Brady and his wife Kate quarrel over her ne'er-do-well relatives for twenty-seven years of married life, but on account of their children never separate. After the last child is married Kate leaves him one day in spite of his threat to let the chickens starve. Late in the evening he goes to her sister's house to fetch her — out of kindness to the hungry poultry — but meets her coming, to find whether he has fed them. They return together and drop their family differences.

A commander is put in charge of a cruiser which is known to be manned by officers and crew who have "run out" four captains within a year. While averting a crisis he meets with continual trouble, till in the course of some naval maneuvers he assumes the blame for the errors of one of his officers. Within six months the *Ponemah* becomes the crack ship of the squadron.

A Boston man goes to New Orleans to foreclose a mortgage on an old mansion owned by a young and beautiful woman. "Business is business." During Mardi Gras he meets her under accidental and dramatic circumstances. He does not carry out his plan.

A young oculist, impoverished for lack of patients in New York, is deciding late one night to accept a professional opening in a country town, when he is called into the house across the street on an emergency case. He is reassured by his success and the gratitude he arouses, remains in the big city, and finally becomes famous.

As the result of too much indiscriminate shooting in a western mining town, a really strong man ran for the office of sheriff and was elected. When he was threatened shortly after by a man whom he had disarmed while drunk, he proposed a spectacular duel on the main street. At the appointed time the sheriff, who was physically small, was so cool and self-possessed that the other man became panic-stricken and fled. From then on there was a changed code in town.

A burglar enters a house from which he knows the occupants will be absent at a reception. He is about to leave with rich booty when the daughter and her lover appear, about to elope. The burglar, in order to make his escape, poses as a detective, but is foiled by the return of the father, who is supposed to have employed him. As he attempts to slip away, the lover seizes him and recovers the stolen goods in his possession.

Two adventurers enter a western town just before it is water-bound by floods and buy up all three saloons. At extortionate prices they start a tremendous business, which continues until one of the proprietors, moved to eloquence by his own liquor, delivers a temperance speech which turns all his patrons into teetotalers.

A cowboy banker in Chaparosa loans \$10,000 without security to a friend whose brother is carrying through a quick and safe cattle "deal." Before the money has been returned, a government

inspector discovers the irregularity and gives the banker one day to recover the money before exposing him. The friend, unable to make an immediate loan from another bank, decides to hold up a night train on which cash is being shipped away. He is frustrated by the banker in the nick of time, and they go home to find the brother has returned with the original loan plus handsome profits.

An unsuccessful dyspeptic decides to veil suicide by setting his house on fire and cutting his throat in the burning building. Before he has harmed himself he is scorched by a tiny flame. He attempts to put out the spreading fire which soon becomes a conflagration, calls help, saves an old lady in the attached dwelling, and gains an unexpected reputation as the village hero.

#### DEVELOPING THE SHORT STORY—INTEREST

Although there may be danger of pushing too far the distinction between Clearness and Interest, it is fair to say that the story principles so far presented have had to do with the general structure which helps to make narrative clear. There remain many special aspects and processes which contribute to the interest of the finished story. Chief among these is the proper employment of introductions, of characters and characterization, of backgrounds, and of dialogue.

**Story openings.** The opening paragraphs of a short story or pages of a novel are very important in a day of many books and casual readers. Readers have so wide a choice that unpromising introductions often cause them to turn away from what subsequently develops into interesting and readable fiction. There is no one way in which to start a story, and doubtless not all the ways in which stories may be started have been developed. Several commoner ones, however, are continually encountered. The object of them all is to stimulate further reading, each succeeding in its own fashion.

*The prelude.* "Beginning doubtfully and far away," there are certain introductions which do not form part of the story but rather serve as preludes. One of these is the device used in a very large proportion of Kipling's stories—that of expounding informally a truth which the following story is expected to illustrate. It is a difficult way of catching the reader's attention and can be used with success only by those who are singularly individual in their literary style. Another narrative prelude is the sort which describes the circumstances under which a given story is told and creates an atmosphere in harmony with what is to follow. The old, old type is the "dark-and-stormy-night" formula in which a group are described as seated about a camp fire while one narrator tells a camping, hunting, or other adventure story. By various writers, from Stevenson to Joseph Conrad, preludes of this sort are effectively employed. Their success, however, is imperiled by the fact that whatever interest is stimulated is aroused by the sheer skill of the author as a craftsman and not by any immediate interest in a story which is as yet untold.

*The direct introduction.* The direct introduction to a story may be of many sorts—the stimulation of interest in a single character so presented that the reader will care to follow his fortunes; the presentation of a setting so vivid that the reader is eager to witness what is to take place therein; the statement of a conflict of interests or desires of a sort to stimulate curiosity; the suggestion of a mystery which begs to be elucidated.

The most commonly successful type of story opening is that in which the reader is put into the midst of a definite episode or situation and led far enough so that he is unwilling to extricate himself by any other path than that which leads to the

end of the narrative. There are many reasons for the success of this sort of introduction, but none are more important than the fact that by this method the reader is drawn without delay into the tide of events and interested in whatever the story has to promise or supply, or than the further fact that when a story is so opened the eagerness to go ahead with it constrains the author to reduce to lowest terms the amount of explanation which must be supplied before he can proceed at full swing.

*Retrospective narrative.* With the opening paragraph or paragraphs achieved, there is time to turn back to retrospective narrative — the element explaining events which have taken place before the story began, but which are necessary to a full understanding of it. Frequently this material is introduced in simple expository style. Sometimes it appears by means of dialogue or apparently casual allusion to former events. In play-writing the function of this part is well described by the name which is given to it — the exposition. At the outset of "The Merchant of Venice," Antonio's reference to his own seriousness of mood leads to the revelation of his wealth and the form in which it is invested ; to Bassanio's approaching marriage and his need for funds — all of them facts which were true before the opening of the play. In Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People," the first scene demonstrates Dr. Stockmann's public spirit and his independence, as these two come into conflict concerning a town enterprise which he had been investigating and which is just about to be brilliantly successful (see p. 52). In play-writing the exposition must be presented in dialogue form and must create the illusion that the story is actually going forward. The story-writer is not so restricted ; yet he is wisest who keeps closest to straight narrative form.

**EXERCISE**

Observe the three following story openings with respect to their success in arousing interest. What is significant about the definiteness or indefiniteness of time and place? about the use of characterization? about the point of view of the author? Which depends mainly upon "atmosphere"? Which upon a definite complication? Which upon an individual character?

Not that I cared at all! It really did not concern me, and no one realized this more keenly than I did. Still, it was simply preposterous; it was ridiculous; it was absolutely impossible.

To be sure, he had arrived in the city only the week before, an absolute stranger with no one to vouch for him except the Browne-Smythes, who would vouch for any man on earth who they thought could eventually help them. But such an arrival as it was! His confidential secretary preceded him nearly a week. Before his appearance the finest suite in the Hotel Ashland had been engaged and all arrangements for his stay made. On the eventful day he arrived with valet and luggage, and went at once to his hotel in a taxi.

That very same afternoon he called on me, and for over half an hour I studied his immaculately clad six feet two inches and his nice crinkly brown hair, which the moment I saw I longed to rumple, and his dark-blue quizzical eyes. They always looked as though he knew a great joke on some one and was going to let you in on it. Yes, that was it. His eyes looked as though just he and you knew a joke you were keeping from the rest of the world. Of course, I suppose he looked at everybody else in the same way, but still—. He had asked so eagerly, too, if he might not call again that I did not have the heart to refuse him. In fact, I told him I should be glad to have him come the following afternoon for tea.

And now he, John Washburn Barnett of the Beverly Club, New York, as I had triumphantly learned from his card after his departure, was under arrest, charged with stealing Mrs. McCormick's famous ruby pendant, simply because he was the only stranger at

her reception,—the only one of the five hundred odd present whose pedigree she did not know.

To be sure, it was ridiculous. To be sure, it was impossible, absurd and outrageous. As though anyone could not tell by looking into those eyes just once that he was honest to the core! But all this did not help any. The cold fact remained that while the valet lived sumptuously and regally at the Hotel Ashland, his master lodged in a cell.

Nor was this the only fact that confronted us. The ruby was undeniably gone. Since John Washburn Barnett had not taken it —and of this fact I was positive—some one else had. But who? There was Fred Lawrence, who had always admired the hateful stone. But he was rich, very rich, in his own name. Surely, he would not stoop to the theft. Then there was Jack Davids. He was poor enough, goodness knows, but he hated jewelry of all kinds, and besides, he was the very soul of honor.

Out of all this chaos one fact remained clear. The only way I could secure John Washburn's release—which I now admitted to myself was desirable—was by showing the undeniable guilt of some one else. And this I must do before next Thursday morning at ten o'clock, when the case came into court. I had exactly five days and two hours. —(Student theme)

The marvel was that Mrs. Walker should be still plump, placid and unwrinkled, after all she suffered at the hands of her daughter. As a matter of fact, she had not taken Mary's escapades much to heart since that young lady's fourth birthday. On this occasion the limit was reached, and nothing further could affect Mrs. Walker.

Mary had early evinced an unusual aptitude for doing the unexpected—the unpleasantly unexpected; and she could not be scolded or argued with, because she never uttered an intelligible word until the aforesaid fourth birthday. If there were anything more exasperating than to be unable to appeal to the reason of a four-year-old child because you didn't know whether she was dumb or an idiot, Mary would have discovered it. When she did talk, it was worse. Her mother had queried agonizedly for perhaps the hundredth time, "Mary, *darling*, are n't you *ever* going to talk?" Mary looked at her mother calmly.

"I could talk if I wanted to," she observed, and left the room with perfect aplomb.

After this, Mrs. Walker was immune. Mary's unexpectedness might convulse or terrify her friends, but her mother's placidity was unruffled. She regarded Mary's exploits in an impersonal fashion extremely trying to Mr. Walker, but which kept her, as I have said, placid and unwrinkled.

The daring originality and the unfailing bad luck of her escapades at college amused and shocked her friends. Her career was as chequered as a Stuart Tartan. Between her Junior and Senior years she startled the world by blossoming out from a rather dumpy, muddy-skinned girl with stringy hair to a slender, fair beauty. On her graduation her mother decided that she was quite too pretty to be ignored further, and she prepared to take Mary to Europe. It was the old case of locking the stable door after the thorough-bred had gone. For Mary had discovered Tilly.—(Student theme)

'T was noonday in Chepe. High Tide in the mighty River City! —its banks wellnigh overflowing with the myriad-waved Stream of Man! The toppling wains, bearing the produce of a thousand marts; the gilded equipage of the Millionary; the humbler but yet larger vehicle from the green metropolitan suburbs (the Hanging Gardens of our Babylon), in which every traveller might, for a modest remuneration, take a republican seat; the mercenary caroche, with its private freight; the brisk curriole of the letter-carrier, robed in royal scarlet: these and a thousand others were laboring and pressing onward, and locked and bound and hustling together in the narrow channel of Chepe. The imprecations of the charioteers were terrible. From the noble's broidered hammer-cloth, or the driving-seat of the common coach, each driver assailed the other with floods of ribald satire. The pavid matron within the one vehicle (speeding to the bank for her Semestrial pittance) shrieked and trembled; the angry Dives hastening to his office (to add another thousand to his heap) thrust his head over the blazoned panels, and displayed an eloquence of objurgation which his very Menials could not equal; the dauntless street urchins, as they gaily threaded the Labyrinth of Life, enjoyed the perplexities and quarrels of the scene, and exacerbated the already furious combatants by their poignant infantile satire. And the Philosopher, as

he regarded the hot strife and struggle of these Candidates in the race for Gold, thought with a sigh of the Truthful and Beautiful, and walked on, melancholy and serene. . . .

"But were all battling for gain there?" — W. M. THACKERAY,  
"Burlesques : George de Barnwell"

**The characters.** *Presentation of character.* How to present a character (through presentation of appearance, demeanor, habits of mind, and so on) has been discussed at length in Chapter X (see pp. 301-319). Ability to entertain a clear idea of a person about whom one is writing and power to transmit this idea are prime necessities in story-writing. Yet it is a power which needs to be held in reserve and to be exerted only as far as the story demands and, as often as possible, in ways which keep the story moving. Long passages of solid personal description or detailed exposition of character are almost never available for the short story and are seldom resorted to in the novel. The active interest of the reader must be stimulated, and then he must be relied on by indirection to find direction out.

*Fixed and changing characters.* Character as an element in narrative may be roughly classified into changing and fixed character. In most romance — in which the main attention is focused upon the succession of events and the exciting nature of one after another — the characters remain unchanged, serving as fixed quantities which, once defined, always have the same value wherever they appear in the story. In the short story, for the reason that the scale of things and the time scheme hardly allow a chance for development of character, the individuals again are constant quantities throughout. The changing character therefore appears for the most part in narrative which lays its main emphasis upon individuals rather

than events and in stories which are told at considerable length. Any discussion of these, later in this chapter, is rather by way of calling critical attention to them than for any direct application in theme writing.

Characters which are kinetic, changing in quality between the beginning and end of a story, are usually made to do so under pressure of circumstance, this external influence being in a way the outward and visible symbol of a spiritual change. Thus in the story of Macbeth, the man who at the beginning of the play is a sturdy valorous fighter is molded by the influence of the witches, of significant coincidences, of his wife's ambition, of his friends' adulation, and of the final lustful enjoyment of power into something entirely new. And then as the play draws to the close, he is shorn of all his strength by successive withdrawals of one after another of these supporting influences. Characters may thus be made to change from apparent virtue to viciousness as events compel them, or from weakness to strength as a sudden appearance of some emergency impels them to displays of vigor of which they have previously shown little promise.

No less effective in narrative development than this actual change of character is the kind of development by means of which an actually static or constant character is reinterpreted to the reader as the story goes on. Hawthorne's Jaffrey Pyncheon slowly emerges upon the consciousness of the reader as an almost unmitigatedly wicked man, although in the earliest introduction he is presented as affable and generous with only a sinister suggestion of that which he really is. Finally, a combination of change of character and change in interpretation is sometimes used to portray people in whom a consistent change of character comes faster than the

appreciation of this change either by the reader or by the other characters in the story.

*Fashions in the number of characters.* Thus, the individual person is the agent through whom the story is told and by whom the story is dominated. It is extremely rare that any piece of narrative is not centered very evidently about one person. The titles of our greatest novels often proclaim this; from "Pamela" and "Joseph Andrews" through "Evelina" "Cecilia," "Ivanhoe," "David Copperfield," and "Daniel Deronda" to "Diana of the Crossways," "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and "Kipps" and "Clayhanger" the succession is unbroken. All stories but the exceptions which prove the rule center about their heroes and heroines, or "principals," and the secondary characters gathered around them. From the period of Dickens and Thackeray until within the memory of the present younger generation, although the novelists selected their characters, the number about whom they wrote was very large — thirty, forty, and even fifty or more appearing in single novels. There followed — through the influence of the short story, which was necessarily compressed, and of the modern dramatists — a reduction of characters to often not more than five or six or seven, with the result, of course, that far more relative attention could be paid to each of them. Within the last decade a counter movement has taken place in a return to the scale of Victorian fiction.

Yet in every case the process of selection, when one stops to think of it, has been a very drastic one. The individual whose story is told in terms of himself and thirty other people encounters, if he lives in the midst of a community, from thirty to three hundred in every week of his existence and

is continually radiating and receiving influences to and from all of these people with whom he comes in contact. To reduce the number of characters to eight instead of to thirty is after all only a slight added degree of economy.

*Point of view—for Interest.* Character as a narrative element is important not only because it is interesting in itself but because it is a kind of lens through which the other people and the events may be seen, and thus furnishes a point of view which heightens the reader's interest. Whatever the nature of the story—from the most exciting romance to the most restrained type of fireside realism, from "Treasure Island" to "Pride and Prejudice"—what the characters are thinking is quite as important as what they are doing.

Although at first thought it is out of events and occurrences that stories seem generally to be made, yet these are in a way subordinate in the final evaluation of narrative. Even in the most vivid melodrama, the great bulk of the time is taken up in talk which does not accompany action but which rather precedes, interrupts, or follows it. The difference is remarkably slight between the ratios of action and quiet dialogue in melodramas such as "The Whip," "The Eleventh Hour," "The Waifs of New York" and in such introspective studies as "The Doctor's Dilemma" and "Rosmersholm." For the fact is, the value of any event is to be measured only by its importance to those affected by it. No event is equally significant to all who participate in or witness it, and none which involves human beings can be unimportant to everyone or of equally great moment to all. The way, then, in which authors can bring home to readers or playgoers the story which they are trying to tell is in a large measure dependent upon showing what goes on in the minds of people as a result

of what has gone on before their eyes. A chance illustration from Fenimore Cooper will serve. It might be improved upon, but it occurs at the first open page in the first volume of Cooper picked up at random.

Mabel made no answer. Her feminine instinct had, indeed, told her that she was an object of admiration with the quartermaster, though she had hardly supposed to the extent that Jasper believed; and she, too, had even gathered from the discourse of her father, that he thought seriously of having her disposed of in marriage; but by no process of reasoning could she ever have arrived at the inference that Mr. Muir was to be the man. She did not believe it now, — though she was far from suspecting the truth. Indeed, it was her opinion that the casual remarks of her father which had struck her, had proceeded from a general wish to see her settled, rather than from any desire to see her united to any particular individual. These thoughts, however, she kept secret; for self-respect and feminine reserve showed her the impropriety of making them the subject of discussion with her present companion. By way of changing the conversation, therefore, after the pause had lasted long enough to be embarrassing to both parties, she said, —

If a writer of romantic adventure need dilate at such length upon the mental processes of his heroine, it is obvious to how much greater degree stories of character and realistic studies in daily life will develop, by direct or indirect means, what is going on in the minds of the *dramatis personæ*. The most extraordinary study in the relative importance of a given event to different people is of course supplied by Browning in his twelve-fold chronicle of "The Ring and the Book." Herein the tragic story of Pompilia's marriage to Guido, the first unhappy consequences, the developing acquaintance with Caponsacchi, their flight, her subsequent discovery and cruel death, are told from the points of view of three different sets of Romans, of Guido, of Caponsacchi, of Pompilia, of two

different attorneys in the trial before the Pope, of the Pope, and of Browning himself. And the same account thus given achieves with each new telling a fresh and varied interest. In a modern fashion, Mr. Bennett in his two stories of *Clayhanger* and *Hilda Lessways* has done a similar work as he has told of the interrupted love story between Edwin and Hilda, first from the point of view of the quiet young printer, developing slowly in his monotonous Staffordshire surroundings and ignorant of the vital events which were affecting him, and then from the point of view of the woman who suddenly comes into his life, entralls him, and then goes away as unaccountably as she came. The single scene in which the two young people first encounter each other is actually duplicated in the two books. Yet it has so completely a different significance that it is hardly recognizable to the reader of "*Hilda Lessways*" as a transcript of several hundred words from the earlier novel.

**The backgrounds.** On the detailed processes in the description of backgrounds and settings much has been said in Chapter IX (see pp. 292-298). The place of such description in the story is so obvious that only a few general statements in summary are needed at this point. It is neither necessary nor common to limit descriptions to single phases such as color, light and shade, form and dimension, effects other than visible, and so forth. Yet the necessity for compression is so great that as a rule some single aspect is given principal, though not exclusive, emphasis. The effect necessary to promote the progress of the story should never be forgotten. Description is always subordinate, should be made as brief and informal as possible, and should never be indulged in for its own sake. In other words, background and

setting should be indicated only as they heighten atmosphere, character, event, or mood — which are the matters of first importance. Always, therefore, the point of view of the story is important in deciding what should be included or omitted. What the author may care for may not be appropriate to a character through whom he is telling the story ; or what the character ordinarily heeds may be quite out of harmony with his state of mind during a given situation. With all the multitudinous possibilities for accumulated descriptive effects, the real problem therefore is one of rejection, rejection again, and finally scrupulous selection. Only so much description should be employed as *must* be employed.

**The use of dialogue.** Dialogue, or story-telling by means of conversation, almost always appears in narrative. As is illustrated in drama, dialogue can carry on every narrative process. It may suggest and even describe the setting, throw light upon characters, — both the speakers and those of whom they speak, — give information about the past, accompany action, and expound abstract truth. The popularity of dialogue is whimsically shown by the habit of generations of readers who rapidly glance through an unfamiliar work in order to see whether the type pages are broken or not. A story which has solid paragraphs, such as "The Fall of the House of Usher," is by no means so likely to attract preliminary attention as one like "Rip Van Winkle," which is promisingly interspersed with short speeches. This sort of thoughtless test is often, though thoughtless, a not insignificant acknowledgment of the effectiveness of good dialogue in provoking interest.

Conversation, to do its work, need not be smart or epigrammatic, nor need it be an absolutely phonetic reproduction

of human speech. Like every other element in narration, it always has a definite duty to perform ; if it attracts attention to itself as merely clever or bizarre, it fails of its purpose even if it be amusing or interesting. Clever speech should be reserved for clever characters, and from their lips it should sound spontaneous and unstudied. As for dialect, this can be faithfully transcribed only by trained experts who appreciate how distorted is almost all human speech (see pp. 157, 306). The effective method is to put down only the most marked variations which mark Cockney talk from Bowery, or Bowery dialect from that of the negro. For the inexperienced, the attempt to transcribe speech would better end with variations in idiom and not attempt to go on to the subtle peculiarities of pronunciation which are lures toward clumsy failure.

Human speech enlivens a story because description, narration, and exposition put into dialogue form have a certain vivacity which does not always belong to unrelieved narrative. Dialogue which really does its work is dramatic in temporarily subordinating the author's personality to that of the character who is speaking. It therefore contributes most effectively toward giving a sense of lifelikeness to the character. What a man says under given circumstances ; what his prejudices are toward given ideas or situations or individuals ; what kind of words, idioms, allusions, he employs — these are intimate signs of what he is (see pp. 151, 152). Each speaking character should have color enough to be distinguishable by what he says and how he says it. Most people in everyday life seem not to be thus distinguished. If even the trained observer can find no individual traits, he must reject such material ; for fiction is a form of art, and art must always be jealously discriminating.

## SUMMARY

Thus the more important phases of narrative writing, whether with plot or without plot, may be briefly stated. It is evident that in point of construction the basic principles of structure for exposition and argument apply with reference to narration and need only to be slightly modified. As far as Interest goes, the same principles again obtain, although narration has the advantage of being able to rely more upon description and to employ more freely the appeal to daily interest and the use of such devices as dialogue. It is impossible to do more than broadly generalize. There is no space for discrimination between stories of action, of character, of setting, and of idea. There is a large and growing list of books pertinent to the subject, and to these a student who is especially interested must turn for more detailed discussions.

## EXERCISE

The following representative passages furnish the contrast between running narrative without plot and the short story.

In the consecutive paragraphs from Franklin's Autobiography, note the unity of the whole passage ; the domination of the time element in this record of what has happened ; the lack of detail with reference to any brief periods of time ; the methods for marking logical as well as chronological coherence ; and the total absence of picturesque descriptive particulars.

In the story by Poe note the corresponding unity ; the handling of the time scheme ; the very small proportion of undetailed narration (printed in indented paragraphs) ; the attention to coherence in repeated allusions to revenge,

Amontillado, the dampness of the vaults, and in the first definite clue as to what is to happen ; and the visible detail furnishing backgrounds for the successive situations.

#### STEPS IN SELF-EDUCATION

From a child I was fond of reading, and all the little money that came into my hands was ever laid out in books. Pleased with "The Pilgrim's Progress," my first collection was of John Bunyan's works in separate little volumes. I afterward sold them to enable me to buy R. Burton's historical collections. They were small chapmen's books, and cheap, forty or fifty in all. My father's little library consisted chiefly of books in polemic divinity, most of which I read, and have since often regretted that, at a time when I had such a thirst for knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way, since it was now resolved I should not be a clergyman. Plutarch's "Lives" there was, in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time spent to great advantage. There was also a book of Defoe's, called an "Essay on Projects," and another of Dr. Mather's, called "Essays to do Good," which perhaps gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life.

This bookish inclination at length determined my father to make me a printer, though he had already one son (James) of that profession. In 1717 my brother James returned from England with a press and letters to set up his business in Boston. I liked it much better than that of my father, but still had a hankering for the sea. To prevent the apprehended effect of such an inclination, my father was impatient to have me bound to my brother. I stood out some time, but at last was persuaded, and signed the indentures when I was yet twelve years old. I was to serve as an apprentice until I was twenty-one years of age, only I was to be allowed journeyman's wages during the last year. In a little time I made great proficiency in the business, and became a useful hand to my brother. I now had access to better books. An acquaintance with the apprentices of booksellers enabled me sometimes to borrow a small one, which I was careful to return soon and clean. Often I sat up in my room reading the greatest part of the night, when the book was borrowed

in the evening and to be returned early in the morning, lest it should be missed or wanted.

And after some time an ingenious tradesman, Mr. Matthew Adams, who had a pretty collection of books, and who frequented our printing-house, took notice of me, invited me to his library, and very kindly lent me such books as I chose to read. I now took a fancy to poetry, and made some little pieces. My brother, thinking it might turn to account, encouraged me, and put me on composing occasional ballads. One was called "The Lighthouse Tragedy," and contained an account of the drowning of Captain Worthilake with his two daughters. The other was a sailor's song on the taking of Teach (or Blackbeard) the pirate. They were wretched stuff, in the Grub-Street-ballad style; and when they were printed he sent me about the town to sell them. The first sold wonderfully, the event being recent, having made a great noise. This flattered my vanity; but my father discouraged me by ridiculing my performances and telling me verse-makers were generally beggars. So I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one. But as prose-writing has been of great use to me in the course of my life, and was a principal means of my advancement, I shall tell you how, in such a situation, I acquired what little ability I have in that way.

There was another bookish lad in the town, John Collins by name, with whom I was intimately acquainted. We sometimes disputed, and very fond we were of argument, and very desirous of confuting one another, which disputatious turn, by the way, is apt to become a very bad habit, making people often extremely disagreeable in company by the contradiction that is necessary to bring it into practice; and thence, besides souring and spoiling the conversation, is productive of disgusts and perhaps enmities, where you may have occasion for friendship. I had caught it by reading my father's books of dispute about religion. Persons of good sense, I have since observed, seldom fall into it, except lawyers, university men, and men of all sorts who have been bred in Edinburgh.

A question was once, somehow or other, started between Collins and me, of the propriety of educating the female sex in learning, and their abilities for study. He was of opinion that it was improper, and that they were naturally unequal to it. I took the

contrary side, perhaps a little for dispute's sake. He was naturally more eloquent, had a ready plenty of words, and sometimes, as I thought, bore me down more by his fluency than by the strength of his reasons. As we parted without settling the point, and were not to see one another again for some time, I sat down to put my arguments in writing, which I copied fair and sent to him. He answered, and I replied. Three or four letters of a side had passed, when my father happened to find my papers and read them. Without entering into the discussion, he took occasion to talk to me about the manner of my writing; observed that though I had the advantage of my antagonist in correct spelling and pointing (which I owed to the printing-house), I fell far short in elegance of expression, in method, and in perspicuity, of which he convinced me by several instances. I saw the justice of his remarks, and thence grew more attentive to the manner in writing, and determined to endeavor at improvement.

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind and make me a master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to

reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts. By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them ; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious. My time for these exercises and for reading was at night after work, or before it began in the morning, or on Sundays, when I contrived to be in the printing-house alone, evading as much as I could the common attendance on public worship, which my father used to exact of me when I was under his care, and which, indeed, I still thought a duty, though I could not, as it seemed to me, afford time to practise it. — BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, "Autobiography"

#### THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could ; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be revenged ; this was a point definitely settled — but the very definiteness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point — this Fortunato — although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adapted to suit the time and opportunity — to practise imposture upon the British and American *millionaires*. In painting and gemmery Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack — but in the matter

of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him: "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me —"

"Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi —"

"I have no engagement; — come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a *roquelaire* closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and I had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed.

We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe?" said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white webwork which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned toward me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi — "

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True — true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily; but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damps."

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forgot your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"*Nemo me impune lacessit.*"

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc.

We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs.

I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by the arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough —"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it

at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement — a grotesque one.

" You do not comprehend? " he said.

" Not I, " I replied.

" Then you are not of the brotherhood."

" How? "

" You are not of the masons."

" Yes, yes, " I said; " yes, yes."

" You? Impossible! A mason? "

" A mason, " I replied.

" A sign, " he said.

" It is this, " I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire*.

" You jest, " he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. " But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

" Be it so, " I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily.

We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi—"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had him fettered to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall

was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated — I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I re-approached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed — I aided — I surpassed them in volume and strength. I did this, and the clamorer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said —

"Ha! ha! ha! — he! he! — a very good joke indeed — an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh over it at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"*For the love of God, Montresor!*"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud:

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again:

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick — on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!* — EDGAR ALLAN POE

## CHAPTER XII

### CRITICISM AS APPLIED TO NARRATIVE LITERATURE

*Criticism defined.* Criticism the recording of an opinion. The historical method of literary criticism.

*The criticism of single works.* Study of the subject matter. Study of structure and style. Study of personality of the author.

*Constructive processes in criticism.* Selecting a definite subject. Marshaling the details. Using quotations properly. Bringing general knowledge to bear.

*Originality in criticism.*

#### CRITICISM DEFINED

**Criticism the recording of an opinion.** To most college students the word "criticism" seems to carry with it a suggestion of something unnatural and occult. If asked to criticize a work of art, they shrink from the task — feeling that to undertake to criticize the productions of an accepted author is to indulge in a piece of presumptuousness. This attitude of mind comes largely from the suggestion of hostile comment usually attributed to criticism; but such an idea is not inherent in the word, which, as Professor Winchester has defined it, involves "the intelligent appreciation" and "the just estimate" of a work. To criticize a book, therefore, does not necessitate arrogating superhuman powers to oneself. It demands the use of one's intelligence in recording an opinion based on careful reading.

It need not be confused with writing a complete and exhaustive study of an author's whole output, although, even in a brief commentary limited to one book, a knowledge of the

other works of an author is valuable ; nor need it be confused with the ordinary book notice, which is used sometimes by advertisers to stimulate sales and is sometimes turned to account by critics who review a half dozen pieces of fiction in a day and are supposed to tell the whole truth about each in a hundred and fifty words. Such paragraphs are not undignified, for they are of service in aiding the public to select their reading with discrimination ; but they are far too compressed to be called criticisms, even if they are critically discriminating in quality.

Few people hesitate if asked informally to tell whether a new play is worth seeing or not, or even to express briefly and orally their opinion of a new book. Criticism is merely the attempt, in organized fashion and somewhat at length, to express just such opinions as intelligent readers should form of every play they hear or book they read.

**The historical method of literary criticism.** One of the greatest of the historians of English literature developed, as an introduction to his work, the method of historical criticism. In any great undertaking which covers the literature of generations, Taine's procedure in examining the race to which the author belongs, the epoch in which he wrote, the environment in which he lived, and his resultant qualities, is not only extremely valuable but practically indispensable. Without the logical system of grouping which such a method of criticism offers, a history of literature becomes a mere succession of unrelated comments. Such a work necessitates a wide and intimate knowledge of history ; and literature, when thus approached, becomes "the handmaid of history." When properly pursued, historical criticism is highly scientific and enormously valuable to the student of both history and literature.

## THE CRITICISM OF SINGLE WORKS

Taken as a finished product, however, and regardless of the circumstances out of which it developed, a work of art may be studied from other points of view in the effort to arrive at an intelligent appreciation.

**Study of the subject matter.** Any book will furnish abundant material for comment in the mere study of its subject matter. The work of William Dean Howells is as different from that of Jack London as is Sir Walter Scott's from Charles Dickens's. While these general distinctions are quite obvious, careless and half-concentrated attention often fails to reveal the true import of the mere content of a man's work.

The inner meaning of the subject matter of a story is often overlooked by readers who follow the narrative with superficial interest. Few readers of Hawthorne have failed to understand the significance of "The Scarlet Letter" as a title, symbol, and factor in his great romance, but one will never know how many have lost the suggestion value of "The House of the Seven Gables" or the probably smaller number who fail to appreciate to the full the meaning of Donatello in "The Marble Faun." Frequently symbolic factors are used with less emphatic insistence than in the works of Hawthorne. Where they do occur and are perceived, they become vital elements in the story. The careful study of an author's subject matter *in extenso*, the classification even of a single book by means of the subject matter, is a genuine critical task. To observe what kind of characters are employed, what kind of settings they are placed in, what sort of plots, characteristic situations, and episodes are used, what symbols are resorted to, and finally to show what is the significance

of the material, will often give the key to the quality of a work and sometimes explain its success or failure.

The following passages are selections from student themes in criticism of subject matter :

In the works of William J. Locke, together with his rare humor and fine irony, can ever be found a rebellious vein of romanticism, a love of the quixotic. It is true that he does not introduce heroes who, like Don Quixote, ride forth as knight-errants, equipped with armor and accompanied by esquires, to aid fair maidens in distress; nor yet heroes whose minds are warped so far as to compel them to see in windmills, giants to be slain, or in two flocks of sheep, two armies of men about to contend in battle. But, like Don Quixote, they do perform unconventional deeds, say unconventional things, and in general act in an unconventional and quixotic fashion; and just as Don Quixote was, at the times when not obsessed by his madness for chivalry, a man of great goodness and gentleness, virtuous, courteous, and generous, so are there in the works of Locke characters who, in spite of their unconventionality, possess these admirable qualities. Moreover, not only his characters but also his plots are quixotic, and these are elaborated by quixotic and unconventional episodes and situations. The love of quixotism is evident in every phase. — "William J. Locke's Love of the Quixotic" (Student theme)

Cooper's principal characters are wonderfully clever. Either they surpass the ordinary in attainments, or the people who fill in and make the background are unusually clumsy and stupid. Chingachgook and Uncas who are loyal to the English are always upright in their dealings, and they never fail to outshoot, outswim, outpaddle or outwit their enemies. They seemed to live charmed lives and to be proof against arrows and bullets, while even a careless shot sent in the direction of a Mingo proves to be fatal to the treacherous brave.

Hawkeye's rifle never fails him. Time after time he shoots in the manner Cooper describes when he says, "Then, dropping the piece heavily into his extended left hand, it was discharged, apparently by the shock, driving the fragments of the vessel into the air and scattering them on every side." Not once does he miss his mark, even when the object is in rapid motion, while the French

and the Mingos shoot again and again at a man moving no swifter than a canoe can be paddled, without touching their victim.

It has been said that Cooper's heroines are "as sappy as maples and as flat as the prairies." One is not led to contradict this assertion. They show no individuality, and although one may always be brave and the other timid, they are perfectly neutral beings. Cooper gives to his characters a great regard for class distinction, yet although his heroine in one story is of high rank, and in the other is from the middle class, he has them talk and act similarly. They never think or do anything on their own initiative except laugh, weep, or tremble with fear. Once a girl surprises the reader by carrying her sister, who has fainted dead away, on horseback with her. Anyone who has tried to support a fainted person is almost incredulous at the idea of a girl in the saddle supporting one.— "Impossibilities and Improbabilities in 'Last of the Mohicans' and 'The Pathfinder'" (Student theme)

One reason that these stories of Kipling appeal to the adult reader is because they portray so vividly the nature of children. The delightful misconceptions to which little children are subject are illustrated in several of the stories. Thus, in "His Majesty the King," Toby asks to wear his little playmate's sash because he wants his papa to pet him, and he has decided that Patsie's mother pét's her because she wears a wide blue ribbon around her waist. In "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep," poor little Punch in some way receives the impression that paint causes death, and sucks the paint from his Noah's Ark in a vain attempt to kill himself.

In contrast to this ignorance is the startling keenness with which a child often penetrates the hypocrisy of an adult. His Majesty the King shows his keenness of perception when he says he does n't like the captain-man who escorts his mother to entertainments because "he does n't laugh, he only makes faces wiv his mouf; and when he wants to o-muse me I am not o-mused." In "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep," when Aunty Rosa, who has beaten Punch and wilfully misunderstood his every action, wants him to kiss her in order that his mother may not know of her cruel treatment of the boy, he says, "I never kiss you and I'm not going to show off."

The unexpected bravery which children often display is shown in . . .

Kipling further elicits the attention of the grown-up reader in these stories by showing the way in which a child's character may be altered by environment. . . .

Another reason why these stories appeal to the adult reader is because of the finely suggestive quality of the descriptions. . . .— "The Appeal to Adults in Kipling's Child Stories" (Student theme)

**Study of structure and style.** In the study of literary form as applied to fiction, all of the two preceding chapters (and far more than this) is involved. In the largest aspect comes the question of complete structure. There are all degrees of difference possible in prose fiction between the structure of the "well-made plot" and the structure of the modern realistic novel. In the discussion of structure, it is fallacious—usually absurd—to think, talk, or write as if one type of story were the standard and all departures from it were in violation of some universal code. Fiction, like all other literature, runs more or less in waves of fashion. Thus "the intelligent appreciation and the just estimate" of a work may point out that the work of one man moves inevitably from the opening situation, through an accumulation of incidents, to the concluding scene, or that the product of another is put together in a somewhat casual and apparently haphazard fashion; but it is neither necessary nor wise to cry out against either of these methods of story-telling. Both of them have been used by the great story-tellers, and both of them with great success. Strangely enough, the enthusiasm of critics and of authors has for centuries been so great that many of the wisest have frequently been led to write excitedly in behalf of one form of story and in hostile attack upon the other.

General structure, however, is but one feature of the technique of story-writing. Aside from discussion of plot and plot structure, the whole field of description presents itself

with reference to both background and character. The use of dialogue, the introduction of expository matter, the degree to which the story may even be a whole essay well or badly converted into narrative, are pertinent to this department of criticism. Finally, matters of lesser detail are by no means without interest. An author's characteristic sentence structure, his diction, his use even of epithet and descriptive verb, are capable of being discussed to good purpose.

The following passages are selections from student themes in criticism of method — the first, of character development ; the second, of dealing with backgrounds :

The sterner character' when introduced by Churchill refuses to disclose to us his real identity. However naturally he may converse and behave, he still appears to keep his Holy of Holies to himself. His actions spring from the outside, not from the real heart. He seems unable to suspect his own inner depths, hiding them by what he thinks is his real self. If he does act in accordance with his inmost secret character, he is as incomprehensible to the reader as to himself, and seems not to be particularly deep. John Hodder's exterior is frank enough, while taciturn Jethro Bass is silent to excruciation, and never utters a word that does not suggest a double meaning. Yet both are alike in possessing a sensitive reserve which shuts us out from their inner being. The true soul of each is hidden, yet we are forced to suspect it, to wonder about it, and to speculate upon it. The unprobed depths are mysterious. But we do not suspect them from any action of the character himself ; it takes the comments of others to suggest their presence. This comment is invariably vague and oracular. There seems to be nothing suggestive in Jethro Bass's admonishing Jock to build his steeple tight. But Jock's soliloquy opens our eyes : "Guess he 'll build his 'n tight, whatever it is. . . . He 's an all-fired sight smarter 'n folks in this town think he be. They don't take notice of him because he don't say much and stutters. . . . I would n't be afeard to warrant he 'd make a racket in the world some of these days. Jethro 's got a kind of power you don't often come across. Folks don't suspicion it."

After our eyes are opened, it is simple to guess Jethro's thought when he suggests that Napoleon "found things goin' his way. Did n't have to move 'em." And yet this does little toward fathoming the character of the speaker, and we are in almost as dense darkness as before. We always have suspicions, but they seem scarcely justified; we get the impression that the author expects us to understand. Eleanor Goodrich says of John Hodder in "The Inside of the Cup," "I felt all the time that he could say something helpful if he only would. . . . Every Sunday . . . he stirs me up, not by what he says, but by what he is. . . . You feel that there is a truth shut up in him which he cannot communicate." Nelson Langmaid, sent to offer Hodder the rectorship of St. John's, says to his brother-in-law, "Are you sure that this man's orthodox?" getting the rejoinder, "You've talked to him for two hours and you've sat looking at him at the table for two more. I thought you were a judge of men. . . . I don't see what you're driving at." Langmaid felt something in the young man that was unorthodox. Perhaps his hair had something to do with the feeling. It hinted at an individualism entirely out of keeping with his reputation. For he was supposed to be strictly orthodox.

The general impression made upon the observer and upon Langmaid by these interviews and conversations is summed up in the latter's soliloquy, "I wonder what that fellow would do if he ever got started!" — "Winston Churchill's Sterner Characters" (Student theme)

. . . Scott uses certain favorite adjectives in the description of buildings and their environs, and so frequently do these adjectives occur, that if one of his descriptions were segregated from its novel, it could be recognized as an unmistakable product from the pen of the "Wizard of the North." "Massive," "ancient," "secluded," "extensive," "castellated," "iron-studded" and "embattled" are so often used by Scott in picturing his castles that the words seem his exclusive property. With him, trees are always "stately," "gloomy," "huge," "dark," and "gnarled." Moats are invariably "wide and deep," walls "high and embattled," and buttresses "massive and ivy-carved."

Effective as these portrayals are, they sometimes take up too much space. For instance, in "Kenilworth," there is inserted in a most

interesting part of the story, while the reader impatiently waits for further news of the Countess of Leicester's adventures, a two-page description of the castle and its surroundings. Thus, Scott in his overpowering passion for romantic backgrounds sacrifices at times the interest of his reader, who is fatigued by tedious descriptive digressions. No matter how firmly he sets his mind on reading and enjoying every word of the description, if it be of unusual length, the reader finds his agile brain hurrying ahead of the story. Scott introduces plenty of moderately long descriptions which can be grasped much more easily and which do not unduly tax one's mental powers. — "Castles and Surroundings in Scott" (Student theme)

**Study of personality of the author.** Behind every book there is or there should be an individuality, itself the product of experiences which are traceable in what the author has produced. Dickens never would have written the works he did, had he not been a zealous believer in the equality of human rights ; nor would he have possessed the zeal he did if he had not passed through his struggles from 1824 to 1836. Scott, champion of another type of democracy, kept his eyes riveted upon the past, and was filled with an enthusiasm for the dignity of established tradition because of his ancestry, his home training, his social training, and his professional experience. These men were consistent to one set of principles all their lives, but frequently in the works of a man a very distinct modification of convictions takes place. Increasing maturity may bring soberness and conservatism with it, or a sudden and vital experience may remake an entire philosophy of life. Thus in the work of William Dean Howells, what he wrote after he had come under the influence of Tolstoy was filled with a new spirit undiscoverable in his earlier writings.

*Books explained by the author's experience.* Facts in the lives of authors, therefore, are sometimes of great value in

making plain the meaning of their plays or stories; and for this reason it is legitimate to study them. Mere literary gossip, though often harmlessly interesting, should be distinguished from substantial information. A clever retort on a particular occasion, or a novelist's favorite sort of buttonhole flower, is one sort of thing, and the vital facts of his life quite another. These latter may account for the very heart and substance of his work. A given author may have been born of notable parentage, reared under striking conditions, may hence have been subjected to extraordinary influences, and have fallen as a result into or out of sympathy with certain fundamental ideas. It is quite possible that only through a knowledge of these facts can we understand some aspects of his work which would otherwise be quite baffling.

*Authors revealed in their works.* On the other hand, it is frequently profitable to reverse the process and learn of the author's character from a study of his works. How a man has lived may be wholly at variance with what he has written. We may prefer one phase of him to the other, but we are entitled to an intelligent interest in either. Of a new author, or one whose biography is only a fragment, most of what we know may have to be derived indirectly from his works if it is to be known at all. The essential man — with his likes and dislikes, his convictions and his prejudices, his incoherencies of thought and oddities of reasoning, his quips of fancy and tricks of imagination — is revealed perhaps more faithfully between the lines of his own writings than he could be in the laborious compilations of a biographer. The author's subject matter and form, — what he writes about and how he writes it, — aside from any interest they possess in themselves, may be mines of information about his own personality.

The following passages are selections from student themes in criticism based upon a knowledge of the author — the first upon the author's experience and character as determining the subject matter, and the second upon the method of workmanship as revealing his character :

Through the correspondence of Jane Austen and her sister Cassandra during their rather infrequent periods of separation, we get a very fair idea as to the kind of life that she was living in the midst of this conventional family in the remote village of Steventon. The greatest excitements recorded are occasional dancing parties described as balls, or "little hops," the determining factor in the selection of a name being, I suppose, the size of the subscription and the number of victims. A cousin, the widow of a French officer who fell during the Revolution, stimulated them to attempts now and then in amateur dramatics, a diversion of which we have a more or 'less accurate reminder in "Mansfield Park." Most of the time was spent, however, in an almost dead level of quietness. A male caller was an event ; an invitation to dinner, a red-letter day ; a dance marked an epoch in life ; and the departure of a friend from the neighborhood, particularly if he was a man friend, was a catastrophe.

All of this I mention at length as it prepares one for the background in all of her books. Her heroes and heroines come from the upper middle class. Their income is always ample and usually greater than their breeding. The only reason that the question of bread and butter interests them at all is that, with their comparative wealth, they have so much less than others that are extremely wealthy. They enjoy a comfortable position from which they can look with conscious superiority on not only the laborers but often the lower middle class. And the only thing to disturb them in life is their knowledge of a definite dividing line between themselves and the real aristocracy. — "The Flavor of the Times in Jane Austen's Novels" (Student theme)

Another of Shaw's peculiarities in handling the directions is his tendency to precipitate his personal likes or grievances into the play, whether they are apropos or not. For instance, in "The Doctor's Dilemma," he describes Jennifer upon her first appearance as having

"dark-brown hair dressed so as to look like hair, and not like a bird's nest or a pantaloons' wig." Now, if Shaw had said that she had "simply-dressed, dark-brown hair," we should have obtained as distinctive a picture as we do through his invective. But we should not have been informed that Mr. Shaw hates artificiality, display, wastefulness and idiotic fashionableness. In other words, if he had written in my way, he would not be Shaw.

Another very striking example of this sort of thing is found in Act III of "Man and Superman" where Shaw takes up almost two pages of very fine print in demonstrating that not all tramps and paupers are drunkards or weaklings. Of course, this is a vastly interesting subject, but it has nothing to do with the play. It is mixed up in the potpourri and labelled stage directions; but we, as sensible people, are quite sure that it is not and never could be stage directions. Shaw himself gives an apology, or as much of one as he ever would offer: "Let us be frank in this matter before we go on with the play; so that we may enjoy it without hypocrisy." As a matter of fact, we could have gone on and enjoyed the play without this interpolation, but Mr. Shaw could not have done so. We don't mind his becoming chatty with us; in fact we are rather proud of our supposed inability to enjoy a hypocritical play.—"George Bernard Shaw's Stage Directions" (Student theme)

#### CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESSES IN CRITICISM

**Selecting a definite subject.** The inexperienced writer, even after he has read a piece of narrative literature and has so far acquainted himself with it that he can talk informally about it, is still at a loss as to what point of approach to make in attempting a written criticism. The method of discovering what is the valuable subject matter is a rather simple one. It is almost impossible for one to read a book, a group of plays, or a set of short stories without in some degree "reacting" upon them. Some features must have impressed the reader more than others, unless the works in question are hopelessly barren. One reader is interested by Kipling;

another charmed by De Morgan; a third finds Dickens deep wading; and so on. There must be reasons for the feeling of pleasure or dissatisfaction, and these reasons once sought out and analyzed prove an abundant source for real commentary.

*Deriving subjects from undirected reading.* A student turns to a novel of Mrs. Humphry Ward, for example,—almost any one of them from "Robert Elsmere" to "The Coryton Family,"—and reads it without any preconceived idea. He becomes interested in the characters, in the progress of the story, in the picture of present-day English life, and in the problem which is always present in her works. There are many possible features in the book which may finally gain first place in his interest, but as the reading progresses he discovers that his attention is more and more drawn to the idea that this story is the work of a learned and industrious author. To him the chief discovery is that the book is a chapter in the history of human thought; that the leading characters are intellectuals; and that the discussions of socialism, pictures of campaign riots, studies of defective drainage, or representation of the working classes are the passages around which the story is constructed. If he can make this impression clear, he will succeed in writing a piece of criticism. Another student may launch upon the reading of one of Arnold Bennett's longer stories, "Clay-hanger" perhaps, or "The Old Wives' Tale." As he turns the pages of the thick book he comes to realize that he is chiefly attracted not so much by the action as by the analysis of the minds of the actors. This method of telling a story may appeal to him or repel; but if he can make clear just what the feature is and why he approves or condemns it, he

will be doing the work of a critic. A third, to illustrate once more, may select a story of Galsworthy. He will not have read far into "The Country House" before he comes to the dinner scene, with its series of portraits. There are a dozen reasons for being interested in Galsworthy, but this student is charmed by the compression of his style and his combined suggestiveness and restraint. The subject expounded becomes a piece of criticism.

*Reading for a special feature.* Criticisms which grow spontaneously out of this sort of experience are likely to be most interesting to both their writers and their readers. The honest critic, of course, does not determine in advance what his verdict is going to be. Yet it is possible and legitimate from the start to concentrate on a single aspect of a book — the purpose and point of view of the author, the types of character he employs, his method of developing them, the distinguishing qualities of style and diction, or any one of a score of other subjects. Such a choice brings with it the advantage that note-taking is made easy from the beginning. The more general approach is likely to demand a more careful second reading, but either approach will exact from any but the most experienced workman a deliberate and painstaking accumulation of material before any writing is done.

**Marshaling the details.** A temptation to arrange the main divisions of a criticism in a purely mechanical fashion lies in wait for many student theme-writers, who instinctively avoid this pitfall in other sorts of exposition. They are likely, in commenting upon the short stories of Poe, to incline toward a series of observations upon each of ten or a dozen stories, each in an independent paragraph or section; or if they avoid this elementary order, to divide them into tales of horror,

detective stories, grotesque and arabesque, and then to cite three or four stories in somewhat independent fashion under each head. Or similarly, in writing upon the characters of some author, there is danger of classifying them under the head of men, women, secondary characters, and so on.

The difficulty of adopting such a method is that the resultant product is not really logical in character and is absolutely certain to contain a great deal of avoidable repetition. To expound the proper method is to return to the fundamental questions of arranging the whole composition already touched upon in Chapter II, on The Whole Composition, and Chapter VII, on Exposition. The details are useless in themselves except as they build up essential and logical headings in the whole composition. Mr. Brownell, for instance, in discussing Cooper's Indians,<sup>1</sup> after an introduction in which he dissents from the ordinary concept of Cooper's Indians, does not take up one after another of the Cooper stories, discussing each in turn, but bases his contention on the following points: (1) they correspond closely to life; (2) the most "idealized" is full of human failings; (3) they are individually distinguished one from another. In this brief section Mr. Brownell alludes in the main to "The Last of the Mohicans," and to others of the "Leather-stockting Tales" as they supply data. The result is that he is always the master of his material instead of being a mere outrider who trots along beside it and allows it to "gang its ain gait."

**Using quotations properly.** For the inexperienced, the problem as to how to use this material is often an embarrassing one. The common inclination is to defer to the feeling that the author has done his work so well that a few selected

<sup>1</sup> Brownell, American Prose Masters. See section 4 under Cooper.

quotations will represent him better than comment upon his work. In the preparation of the sort of book notices already referred to, the resort to a fairly long quotation is justifiable by the fact that some distinct impression must be made in the short space and a representative passage is more likely to do the work than a few brief generalizations. But to overload a so-called criticism with long quotations is to avoid the real work assumed by the writer, for the result is that the real task of judging the work is simply passed along to the reader. In general it may be said that only a very small proportion of what pretends to be criticism should be in quoted form; further, that four or five or six very brief passages, more in the way of citation than quotation, are in their total more effective than one long passage; and finally, that abundant allusions and references are the bricks and mortar out of which discriminating interpretation is builded, quotation in the last analysis serving only a decorative end.

**Bringing general knowledge to bear.** No piece of criticism of any book or group of plays or short stories can avoid being diluted unless the writer brings his general knowledge to bear on the question in hand. The point can be expounded by a series of illustrations from Thackeray and his works.

*Knowledge of other literature.* A single book can be made clear by allusion to other works of the same author. There is no question that a careful reading of "Vanity Fair" would afford some basis for judgment, but it can be much better understood if read in the light of "Pendennis" and "The Newcomes." They are novels of the same sort, located in London in the same period, and written about the same class of people. What is true of "Vanity Fair" seems doubly true if it is confirmed by references to "Pendennis" and

"The Newcomes." Observations on a book may also be enforced by references to other works of the same class from other pens. What is true of Thackeray's "Esmond" gains in effect if corroborated by references to such other historical novels as Scott's "Guy Mannering" and Dickens's "Barnaby Rudge." Thackeray's "Barry Lyndon" is so different from his other works that it might perplex a reader who was not reassured as to the romance of rougery by allusion to typical novels like Smollett's "Ferdinand, Count Fathom" or Fielding's "Jonathan Wild." Every piece of literature read should be in a way a possible source of allusion and illustration in future critical writing.

*Knowledge of history and human nature.* Outside the field of literature there is a still greater fund of knowledge which should be at the disposal of the critic. If one is writing a comment upon Thackeray's "The Newcomes," all that he knows about the period when "The Newcomes" was written should be at his disposal. The position of a tradesman in those days, the status of the Londoner returned from Indian service, the general topics of interest to the cultivated man of the day, are all of them sources of either light or bewilderment to the modern reader of this book. So, too, any knowledge of the city in which the story is placed will make the references to the London clubs, the Inns of Court, the restaurants, the streets, and the squares more intelligible. And the degree to which the author employs this material is of importance in forming an estimate. Finally, one's knowledge of human nature and human life has its place in any criticism. No student can understand Thackeray's "Pendennis" if he is totally blind to the fact that this is an experience possible to any young man of the type of

Pendennis. If he does not appreciate that there are such people, such temptations, such temporary defeats, such ultimate victories in the life of young manhood to-day, he is incapable of criticizing the book ; and if a critic does understand all this, he should bring this knowledge to bear by allusion to such facts in life as are pertinent to the book.

Finally, with reference to all this employment of general information, a word of caution should be uttered. There is a danger of indulging in vain ostentation as well as a difficulty in using pertinent material. Both of these can be met if the critic keeps his reader in mind. To refer to a book or character which is so unusual as to mystify instead of enlighten, is far worse than to make no reference at all. A first question to answer is whether the reference that comes to mind is proper ; a second is whether it is intelligible. Such a word of caution, however, is given merely as a matter of form. The inclination of the average student is such that he needs all possible encouragement to use the rather scarce material which is at his disposal.

#### ORIGINALITY IN CRITICISM

In writing themes for the practice, which is the prime motive for all class composition, many good students are embarrassed by the thought that if they attempt a work of any standard author, it is impossible for them to be original. If by being original they mean that it is impossible for them to say anything new and true, their contention is doubtless a sound one ; but there is another way in which, even though they arrive at well-established conclusions, they may be completely original, and this is by making their work first-hand

from beginning to end. If the reading is fresh in mind, if intelligent notes have been taken as it has proceeded, and if the conclusions are made independently, or even in ignorance of what the conventional criticism is, a critic need feel no compunctions as to the originality of his work. Where one looks for the evidence of personal and fresh workmanship is particularly in the details which are cited as evidence of the general points. If these are so presented as to show beyond doubt that the writer has collected them himself and is using them as though they had never been used before, the criticism, even though it agree in general with what others have said, will be sufficiently different in its references and allusions — as well, very likely, as in the order of its main divisions — to be worth reading.

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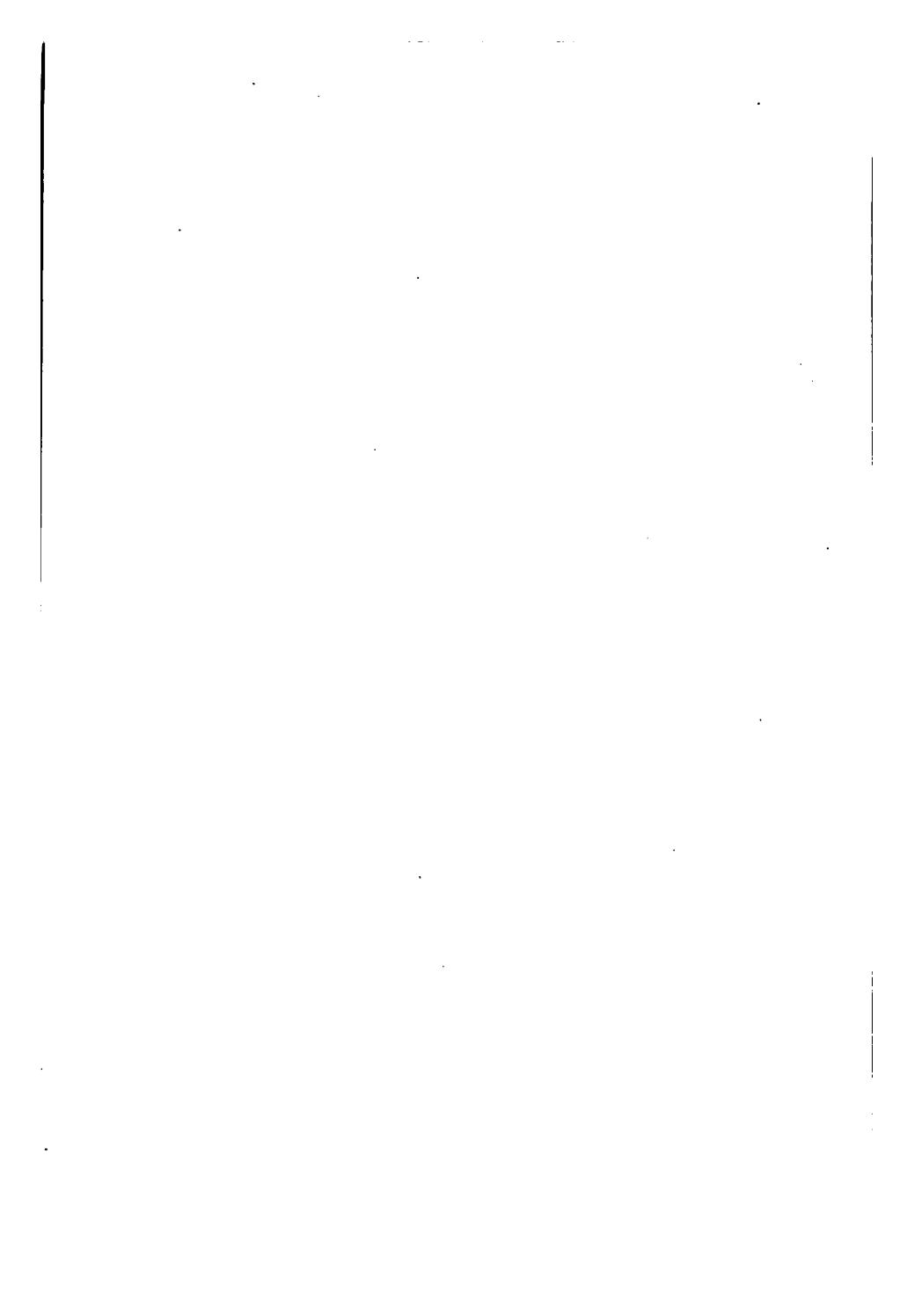
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